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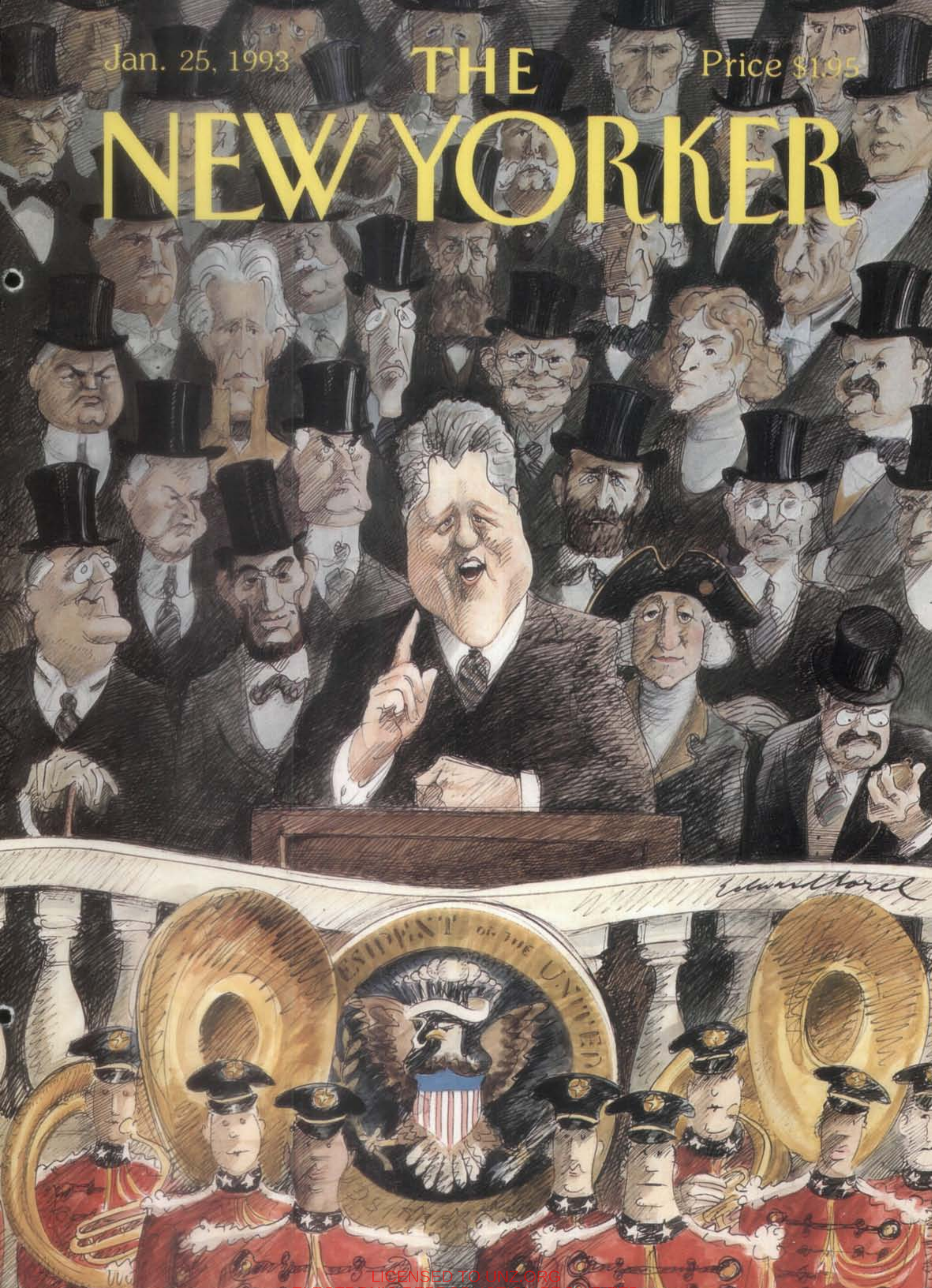
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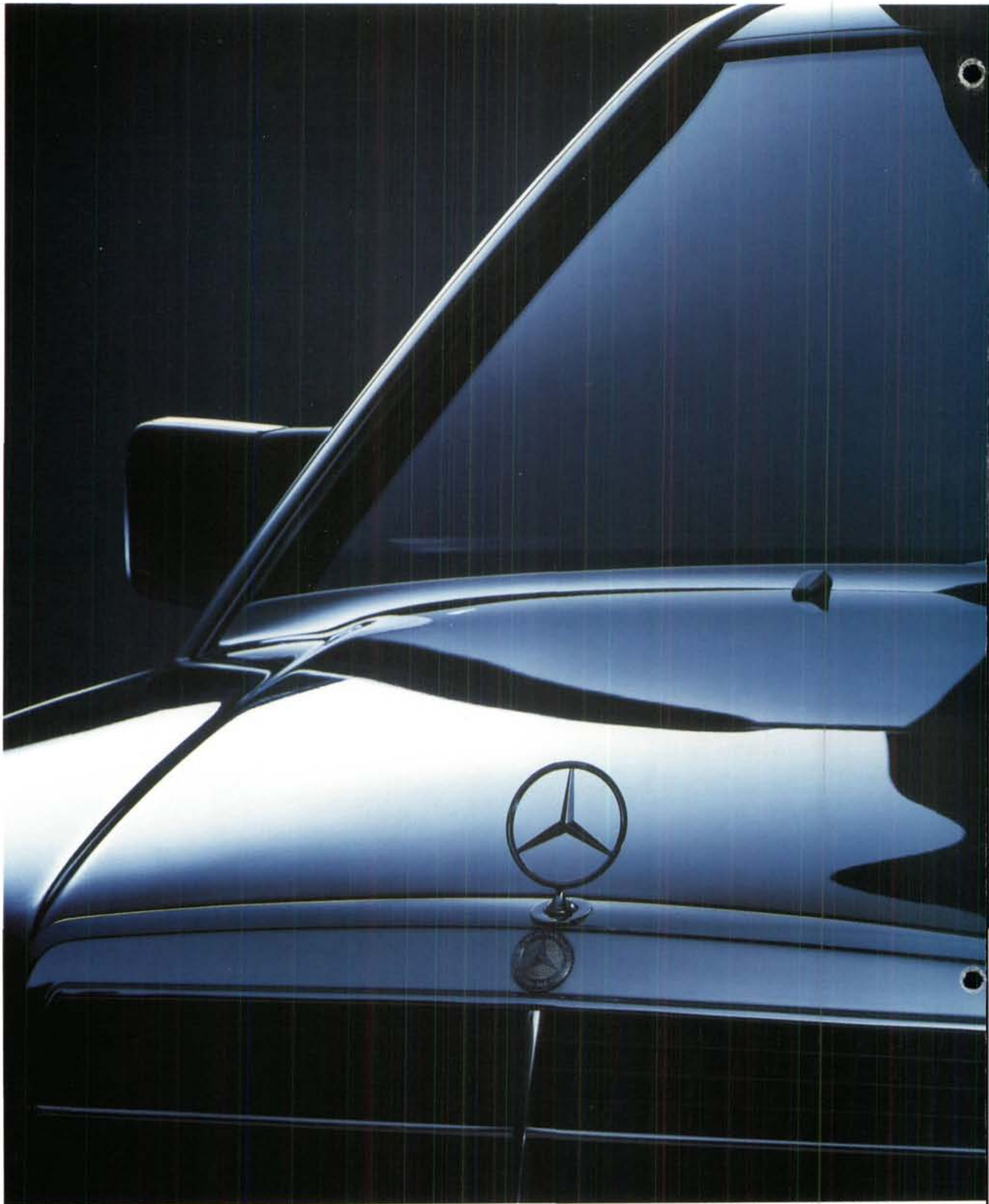

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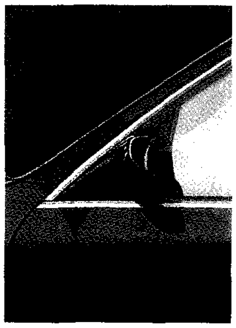

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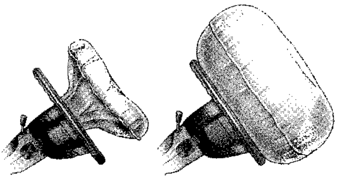

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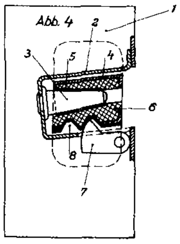

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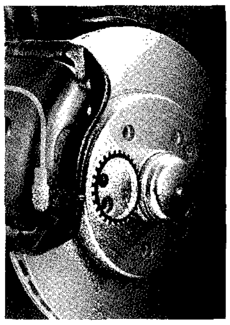

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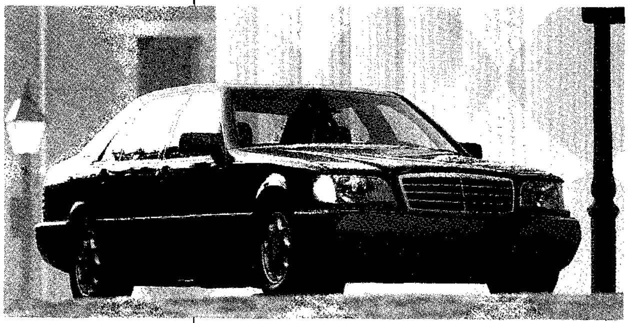

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JANUARY 25, 1993

COMMENT The Choices in Bosnia 4

GOINGS ON ABOUT TOWN 8

THE TALK OF THE TOWN 31

DEPARTMENTS

The World of Business Wild Card . . . . *James B. Stewart* 38
As American Express chairman Jim Robinson bows out,
his choice of successor has launched a boardroom battle royal.

Letter From Washington Waiting for the Call . . . . *Sidney Blumenthal* 48
Bill Clinton survives the transition firmly
in charge of his own agenda.

Our Local Correspondents A Man of Too Many Parts . . . . *Jim Sleeper* 55
Al Sharpton says he's been reincarnated as Dr. King's spiritual heir, but his
critics wonder how long he'll stay the course. Photograph by Richard Avedon.

ARTIST AT LARGE Gowns for the Galas . . . . *Michael Crawford* 67

PROFILE Life Lines . . . . *Benita Eisler* 70
At the height of her acclaim, Agnes Martin dropped
out of the art world to pursue a purer reason for painting.

ARTIST'S NOTEBOOK Coins of the Realm . . . . *Ronald Searle* 79

FICTION "Friend of the Family" . . . . *Katharine Weber* 84

THE CRITICS

Jazz Dizzy . . . . *Whitney Balliett* 92
The Current Cinema Baser Instincts . . . . *Terrence Rafferty* 95
Musical Events The Excursions of Mr. Janáček . . . . *Paul Griffiths* 98
The Theatre Forbidden Pleasure . . . . *Edith Oliver* 101
On Television Columbo in Furs . . . . *James Wolcott* 102
Books Dumb Luck: Bush's Cold War . . . . *David Remnick* 105
Day-O! . . . . *Deborah Garrison* 109
Briefly Noted 111

POEMS

"Foolishly Halved, I See You" . . . . *Elizabeth Macklin* 60
"Entire Lives" . . . . *Albert Goldbarth* 76
"Childhood House" . . . . *Eric Ormsby* 80

SHOUTS AND MURMURS Smoking Incorrectly . . . . *Calvin Trillin* 112

COVER *Edward Sorel*

DRAWINGS *Peter Steiner, Roz Chast, Robert Mankoff, Jack Ziegler, Victoria Roberts, Sam Gross, Arnie Levin, Bill Woodman, Mischa Richter, Donald Reilly, Michael Crawford, Bruce Eric Kaplan*

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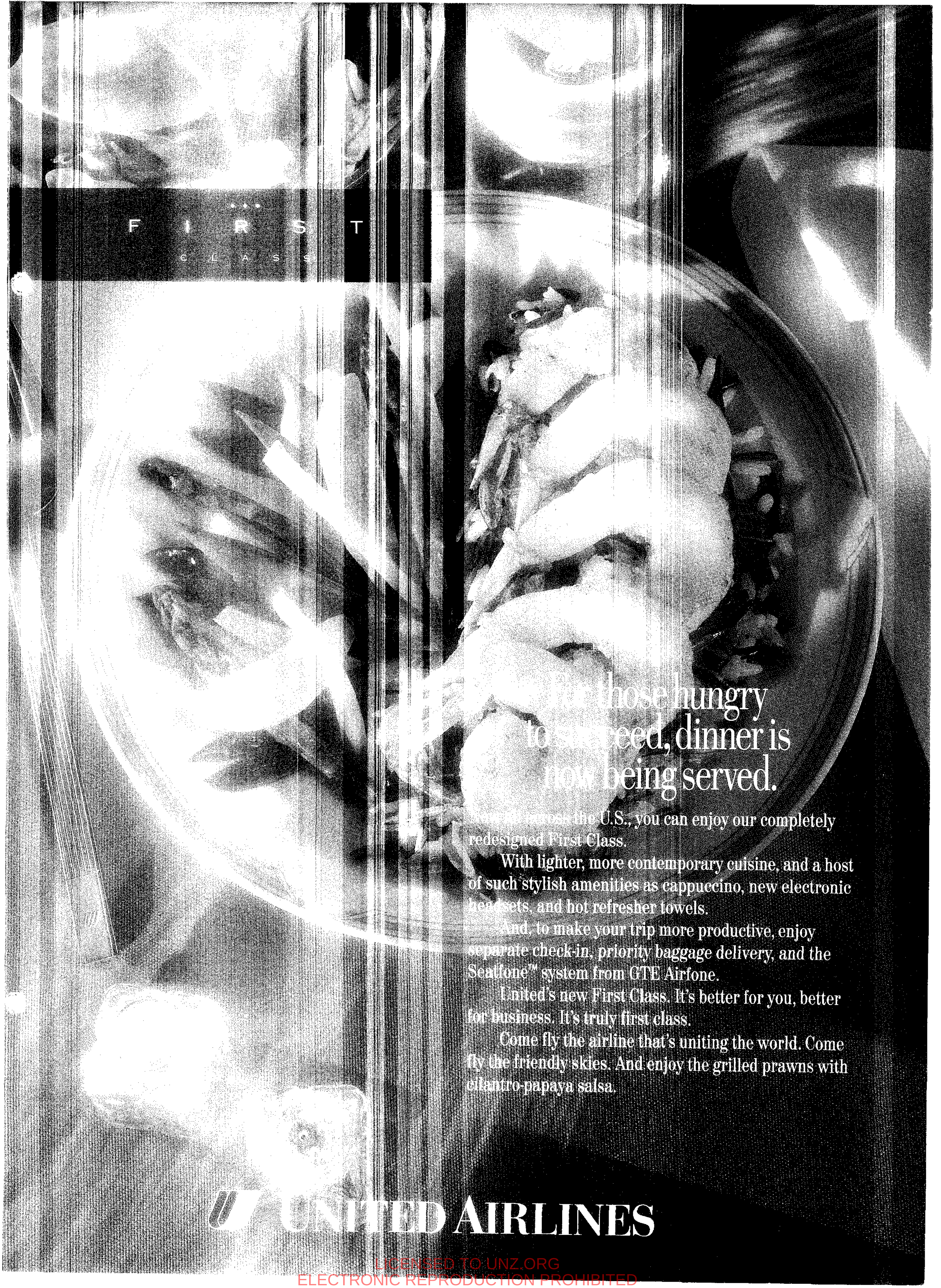

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COMMENT

THE CHOICES IN BOSNIA

As a new American Administration begins its first week, the siege of Sarajevo is in its fortieth. Serbian forces have launched something like a quarter of a million high-explosive shells into the city from the surrounding hills, killing or wounding more than fifty thousand people. In the Bosnian countryside, Serbian practitioners of "ethnic cleansing" have murdered at least a hundred thousand Muslims and driven a million and a half more from their homes. Atrocities unimaginable in Europe for nearly half a century—including concentration camps where tens of thousands are starved and tortured, and the use of mass rape as an instrument of terror—have haunted the international news for months now.

To read and hear such stories is to be filled with outrage, horror, and—unless you happen to be a head of state, it seems—a frantic desire to do *something*. The United Nations has been struggling to provide relief, and to produce some kind of peace agreement, but its efforts have scarcely slowed the carnage. Politicians, human-rights groups, and religious leaders throughout the West have been calling on their governments to intervene; even prominent American liberals have been furiously advocating the use of American military force. Anthony Lewis, for one, has been appealing since June for the United States to strike from the air against the gunners camped in the hills above Sarajevo.

Some observers have suggested that this enthusiasm among liberals for American military intervention, together with an apparent new aversion among conservatives to foreign entanglements, represents a historic turnabout. The reality is more complicated. It's true that there is a strain of ultranationalist, xenophobic conservatism, led by Patrick Buchanan, that currently regards all international initiatives with suspicion. Yet such leading conservatives as Ronald Reagan and George Shultz are among the voices calling for the use of American force in Bosnia. Different interventions have different constituencies. Last week's bombing of military installations in Iraq drew support from across the political spectrum. The current expedition to Somalia, though justified by no conventional "national interest," enjoys

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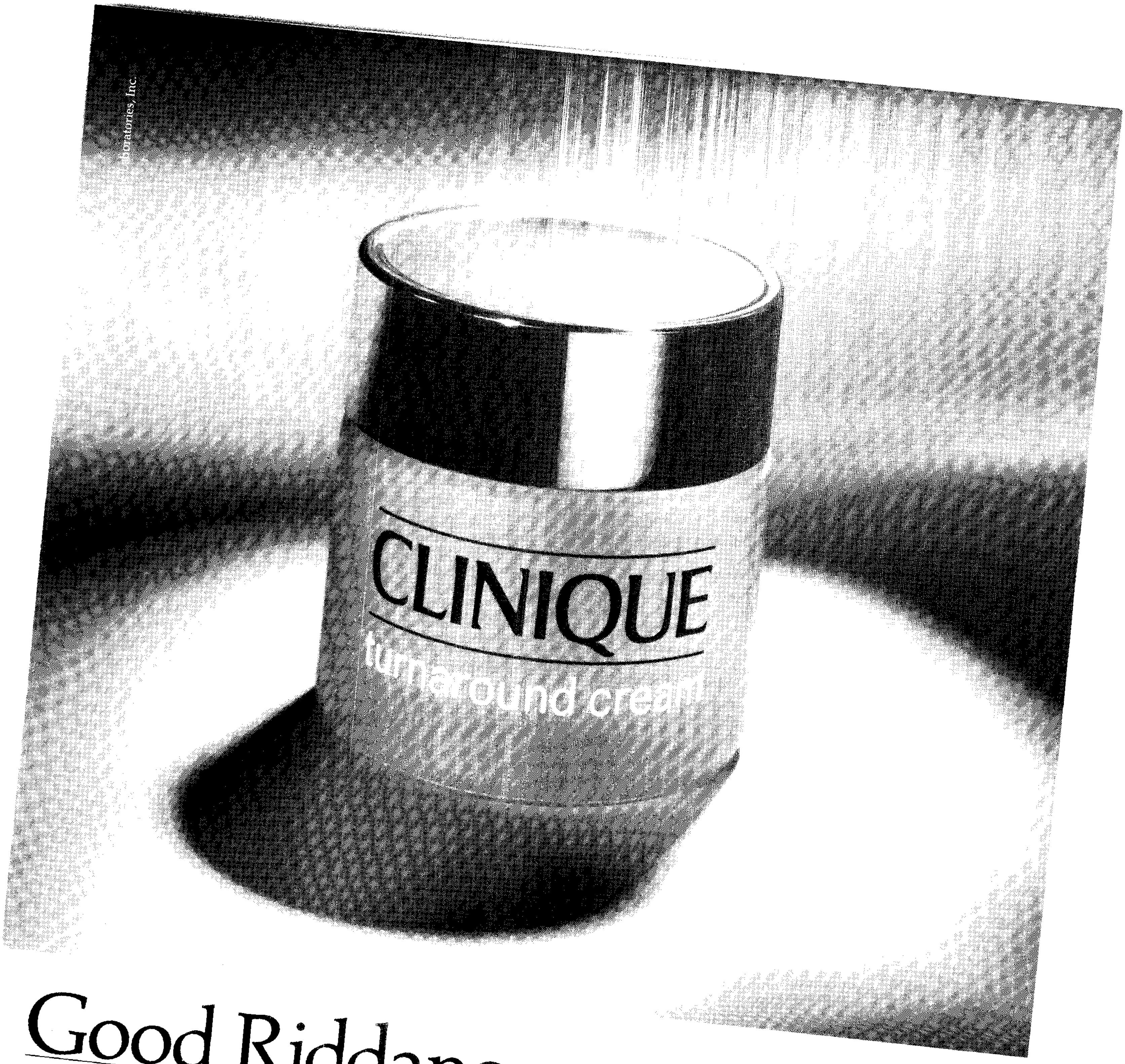

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even wider support; the scale of Somalia's suffering and the intervention's lack of military risk make it as politically unassailable as hurricane relief. And the Pentagon, battling to save its immense budget, is eager to be seen doing something worthwhile overseas.

Sadly, there may be opportunities for similar missions to other "failed states" in the years ahead. The rules of international behavior, like the domestic politics of intervention, are in the midst of profound change. In Somalia, the United Nations set a large precedent by blessing an intervention without an invitation from a member state. As the postwar empires—Soviet, European, the Pax Americana—continue to fragment, as new states and polities storm into being, and as some of the world's weaker states dissolve entirely, our long-held notions of national sovereignty and self-determination will also have to change. In the aftermath of the Cold War, we have inherited a world liberated from the Soviet threat but rife with new perils, and the once unassailable American economy is gravely ill. Bill Clinton and his foreign-policy staff may be in an interventionist mood, as has been widely reported, and they may, as we have also been hearing, approach international affairs with human rights and the encouragement of democracy firmly to the fore. Nonetheless, even in this shape-shifting historical moment, we need to acknowledge the limits of our power to direct the world beyond our borders. Fortunately, there are more possibilities under the sun than insularity and empire.

Non-intervention should still be a first principle, and what the political *philosopher Michael Walzer calls the* "rules of disregard"—the tests for contravening that principle, for justifying intervention—should be strictly applied. Given the readiness of states to invade one another, Walzer writes in his "Just and Unjust Wars," "the burden of proof falls on any political leader who tries to shape the domestic arrangements or alter the conditions of life in a foreign country."

That said, Bosnia qualifies. The Serbians are manifestly guilty of war crimes, and, to quote Walzer again, "people who initiate massacres lose their right to participate in the normal (even the normally violent) processes of domestic self-determination." This war stands a good chance, moreover, of spreading beyond the former Yugoslavia.

The tangle of ethnic hatreds, nationalist passions, and civil wars within civil wars in the Balkans is, of course, extremely daunting, and that accounts for much of the reluctance of the United States and Western Europe to act. Somalia is a desert police action, Bosnia a full-blown mountain war. And the Bosnian Muslims, for all their weakness, are fighting fiercely. Simply arming the Muslims, as has often been suggested, might enable them eventually to force a more advantageous settlement—but at a dreadful cost in human lives. Another measure frequently suggested is the enforcement of the "no-fly zone" that was designated by the United Nations in October. Such enforcement might redress the diplomatic affront represented by Serbian flouting of the zone, but it would have little effect on the fighting. The war in Bosnia is a ground war.

As for the idea that striking the Bosnian Serbs, or Serbia itself, from the air would somehow break the Serbs' will to fight, it seems a forlorn hope. A more likely political result of Western air strikes would be an explosion of Serbian nationalism and paranoia. Aerial bombing is an extremely blunt weapon. Used as it was last week, it may serve to send Saddam Hussein a sharp, and sharply limited, message. But two years ago it did not persuade the people of Iraq to overthrow Saddam Hussein, and it would not persuade the Serbs to depose their President, the nationalist demagogue Slobodan Milosevic, whom they recently reëlected. Militarily, the effect would be modest. Even if the heavy *artillery around Sarajevo should be destroyed*, the siege could be continued with mortars. Supply lines to Serbia are vulnerable but are not of critical importance, and the Bosnian Serb forces, which already control two-thirds of Bosnia, are not deployed in heavy, regular-army concentrations, safely away from civilians.

The new President of the United States may find that there is no way to stop the killing in Bosnia. After so many months of diplomatic failure, the options for intervention have narrowed drastically, and there is no hope of simply reversing Serbian gains and restoring the status quo ante. But if the aim of an intervention is to save lives the most promising plan that has so far been offered is to create "safe havens" for Muslims, based on the territory still in the Bosnian government's hands. This is also the most frightening plan for Westerners to contemplate, because it would require thousands of Western troops. But the United Nations has estimated that four hundred thousand Bosnians are in danger of starving or freezing to death this winter, and there are towns and cities in central and eastern Bosnia that have been isolated for months, without access to food or relief. A convoy that reached Srebrenica, in November, found amputations being performed on civilians without anesthesia. American officials in Zagreb recently received a message from an amateur radio operator in Zepa, a town that has been inaccessible since April, suggesting that tens of thousands of people may starve to death there by spring. To create "safe havens" in Zepa and Srebrenica, and also in Cerska and Gorazde, Western troops would need to be parachuted in, and U.N. troops would need to meet them overland. The obvious dangers of such an operation might be minimized by stressing its essentially defensive mission, and then if any serious peace agreement is reached in the U.N.-sponsored talks in Geneva, the intervention would quickly turn into a pure relief mission. *But if the Clinton Administration is to* save as many lives as possible in Bosnia, the decision to intervene will have to be made immediately, and our European allies will have to be persuaded to join us. The operation could be under way by mid-February.

Have the United States and the European Community tacitly decided that stopping the slaughter in Bosnia is simply not worth risking French and British and American lives? If so, let us at least begin a massive evacuation and lift all restrictions on Bosnian refugees in Western Europe and in this country, for few of them will be able to go home again. If not, there isn't a moment to waste. ♦

Rock.

For a man known as "Rock," Knute Rockne had an extraordinarily sweet smile. When he was pleased, his leather pumpkin of a face became a sea of wrinkles surrounding one of the great warm smiles of history. But he was indeed a rock. As the most famous college football coach of the century, he led Notre Dame teams for 13 years. During those years, "The Fighting Irish" went through five seasons undefeated. In six others, they lost only one game. They were spurred, pushed, inspired, bullied and shaped into teams so formidable, America waited for the Saturday afternoons when the Irish would be on the radio. Rockne became a national hero on a par with Babe Ruth, Jack Dempsey and Bill Tilden – even though he was a coach, not a player. When he died in a plane crash in 1931, his death was described by the President of the United States as "a national loss." Few American sports figures have known the admiration and respect that were felt for "Rock."

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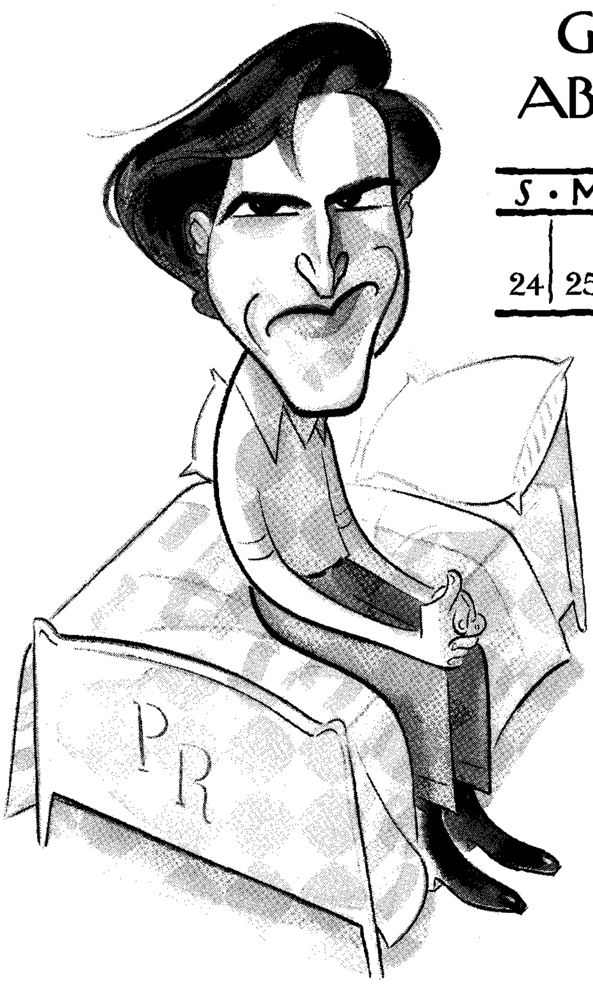


Paul Rudnick, the author of "Jeffrey"

THE THEATRE

Twilight of the Idylls

THE Gershwin music and rosy Manhattan montage that open Paul Rudnick's new play, "Jeffrey," might mislead you into thinking that an idyll is at hand, and while it is certainly apparent that Mr. Rudnick is attempting to reinvent the concept of romance in a time when, as one of his characters says, AIDS is the hateful "guest who won't leave," it is also true that the situation of the titular hero (John Michael Higgins) will have you rewriting your Gershwin like crazy. In a world where sex is here to stay, Jeffrey chooses to be chaste.

Theoretically, that is; for no sooner does our hero take his vow than he meets Someone. Like Jeffrey, the Someone (Tom Hewitt) is gay; unlike Jeffrey, he is HIV-positive. This is a surefire dramatic premise, and if Mr. Rudnick loses track of it in his Scenes from Gay Life he does so in an often entertaining, sometimes touching fashion. The play's closing image—it involves a balloon—is particularly resonant, even if the men's dilemma is still the one summed up in a classic Thom Gunn couplet: "Their relationship consisted/ In discussing if it existed."

OPENINGS AND PREVIEWS

(Please call the phone number listed with the theatre for schedule and ticket information.)

THE BOILER ROOM—A play by Reuben González. Three performances a week are in English; four are in Spanish. Staged by Alex Colón. Preview on Jan. 20. Opens Jan. 21 at 8. (Puerto Rican Traveling Theatre, 304 W. 47th St. 354-1293.)

BORN GUILTY—Zach Grenier in Ari Roth's adaptation of a 1988 book by Peter Sichrovsky. Previews run through the matinée of Jan. 24. Opens Jan. 24 at 7. (American Jewish Theatre, 307 W. 26th St. 633-9797.)

THE LAST YANKEE—The première of a new play by Arthur Miller, with Tom Aldredge, Frances Conroy, Rose Gregorio, and John Heard. Preview on Jan. 20. Opens Jan. 21 at 7:30. (Manhattan Theatre Club, at City Center, 131 W. 55th St. 581-1212.)

SCAPIN—Molière's comedy, in an adaptation, by Andrei Belgrader and Shelley Berc, that incorporates music—gospel, blues, and rap—by Rusty Magee. Stanley Tucci has the lead. Opens Jan. 20 at 8. (Classic Stage Company, 136 E. 13th St. 677-4210.)

THE YEARS—A new play by Cindy Lou Johnson, with William Fichtner, Julie Hagerty, Marcia Gay Harden, Nancy Hower, Paul McCrane, and Frank Whaley. Previews run through the matinée of Jan. 24. Opens Jan. 24 at 7. (Manhattan Theatre Club, at City Center, 131 W. 55th St. 581-1212.)

OPENED RECENTLY

ANNA CHRISTIE—Liam Neeson, Natasha Richardson, Rip Torn, and Anne Meara head the cast of the Roundabout Theatre Company's revival of the play by Eugene O'Neill. David Leveaux directed. (Criterion Center, Broadway at 45th St. 869-8400.)

BOYS CHOIR OF HARLEM & FRIENDS LIVE ON BROADWAY—The choir celebrates its twenty-fifth anniversary in a staged show. (Richard Rodgers, 226 W. 46th St. 221-1211. Closes Jan. 31.)

BUBBE MEISES, BUBBE STORIES—A musical in which a granddaughter recalls her grandmothers and their stories. Written by, and starring, Ellen Gould. (Cherry Lane, 38 Commerce St. 989-2020.)

THE DESTINY OF ME—A new play by Larry Kramer. (Lucille Lortel, 121 Christopher St. 239-6200.)

FORBIDDEN BROADWAY 1993—A new edition of the long-running show spoofs "Guys and Dolls," "Crazy for You," and "Jelly's Last Jam," among other targets. (Reviewed in this issue.) (Theatre East, 211 E. 60th St. 838-9090.)

THE GOOD NATUR'D MAN—A 1768 play by Oliver Goldsmith. The cast includes Robin Leslie Brown, Frank Geraci, and Kurt Rhoads. Directed by Anthony Cornish. (Pearl, 125 W. 22nd St. 645-7708. Closes Feb. 6.)

HELLO MUDDAH, HELLO FADDUH—A musical based on the song parodies of Allan Sherman. It was conceived and written by Douglas Bernstein and Rob Krausz. Stephen Berger, Tovah Feldshuh, Jason Graae, Leslie Klein, and Paul Kreppel make up the cast. (Circle in the Square Downtown, 159 Bleecker St. 254-6330.)

HENRY V—Mark Rylance has the title role in this Theatre for a New Audience production. Barry Kyle directed. (St. Clement's, 423 W. 46th St. 279-4200.)

JACQUES BREL IS ALIVE AND WELL AND LIVING IN PARIS—A revival of the musical put together from the works of M. Brel by Eric Blau and Mort Shuman. (Village Gate, 160 Bleecker St. 475-5120.). . . **NOTE:** Elly Stone, the current director of "Jacques Brel" and one of the stars of the original production, sings on Sundays following the evening performance.

JEAN COCTEAU REPERTORY—Presenting two shows in rotating rep: **THE IDIOT,** an adaptation, by David Fishelson, of Dostoevsky's novel; and Shakespeare's **MUCH ADO ABOUT NOTHING.** Robert Hupp directed "Much Ado." (Bouwerie Lane Theatre, 330 Bowery, at Bond St. 677-0060.)

JEFFREY—A comedy by Paul Rudnick, with John Michael Higgins. Christopher Ashley directed. (WPA Theatre, 519 W. 23rd St. 206-0523. Closes Jan. 31.)

JEWISH REPERTORY THEATRE—The second of four shows this season is **THEDA BARA AND THE FRONTIER RABBI,** a musical comedy by Jeff Hochhauser and Bob Johnston. With Jeanine LaManna and Jonathan Hadley. (Playhouse 91, at 316 E. 91st St. 831-2000. Closes Jan. 31.)

MOTHERLESS CHILD—A drama by Rosemary McLaughlin, which was directed by Joanne Sagherian. (Wings Theatre, 154 Christopher St. 627-2961.)

OLEANNA—David Mamet, in fine, curmudgeonly form, takes on political correctness, sexual harassment, and a number of other isms in this brief, powerful drama that continues to stir up the ideologues. Rebecca Pidgeon and William H. Macy lend articulate support to a play whose skepticism is as evenhanded as it is corrosive. Not to be missed. Starting Jan. 26, Mary McCann replaces Ms. Pidgeon. (11/16/92) (Orpheum, 126 Second Ave., at 8th St. 307-4100.)

REMEMBRANCE—Set in Belfast, Graham Reid's absorbing and often entertaining play tells the story of a Protestant man and a Catholic woman—both of them widowed and in their sixties—who slowly fall in love. Milo O'Shea and Frances Sternhagen can seldom have been better than they are in the leading roles. (10/12/92) (John Houseman, 450 W. 42nd St. 967-9077.)

RUTHLESS!—This camp musical about a monster child star is harmless and amusing enough—assuming you can stomach the little girl. (Players, 115 Macdougal St. 254-5076.)

SAMUEL'S MAJOR PROBLEMS—A play written and directed by Richard Foreman. (St. Mark's In-the-Bouwerie, Second Ave. at 10th St. For reservations, call 533-4650.)

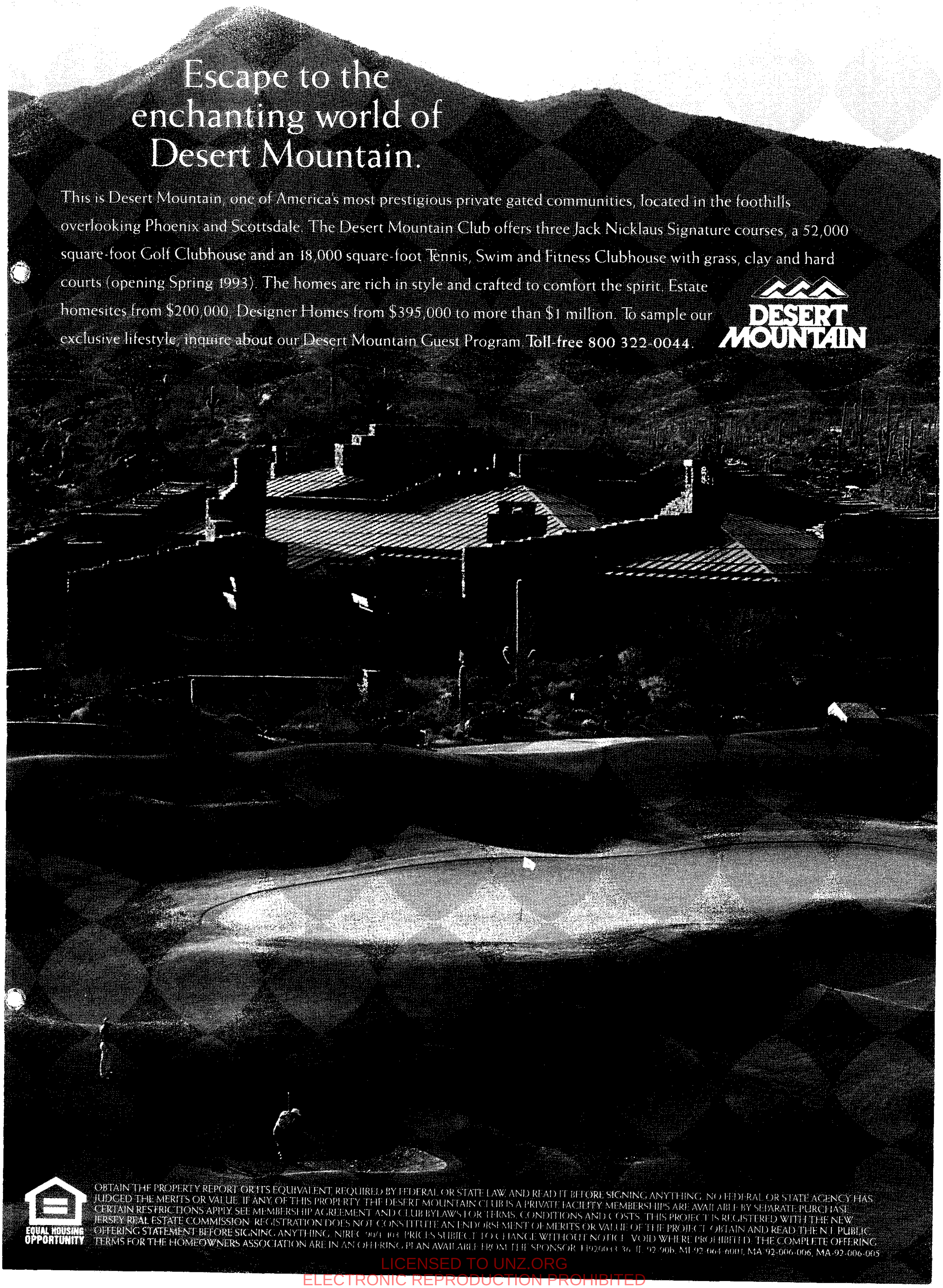
THE SISTERS ROSENSWEIG—Wendy Wasserstein's new play, a comedy with serious undertones, is about the reunion in London of three American Jewish sisters—an international banker, a travel writer, and a wife and mother who's a professional dispenser of advice. They are portrayed by Jane Alexander, Christine Estabrook, and Madeline Kahn. The spirit of Chekhov hovers but never intrudes. Laughter is continuous. (11/2/92) (Mitzi E. Newhouse, Lincoln Center. 239-6200.)

SOMEONE WHO'LL WATCH OVER ME—Alec McCowen (English), Stephen Rea (Irish), and James McDaniel (American) give stunning performances as hostages in Beirut in Frank McGuinness's moving and humorous play. Robin Lefèvre directed. (12/7/92) (Booth, 222 W. 45th St. 239-6200.)

SPIC-O-RAMA—Six well-written characters who have found not only their author but also their performer in John Leguizamo's scintillating and scathing one-man show about Latino life in the Big City. Leguizamo is vivacious, inventive, and very, very funny. The show is original and scenically ingenious. (11/9/92) (Westside, 407 W. 43rd St. 307-4100. Closes Jan. 24.)

YORK THEATRE COMPANY—The troupe's third play of the season is **A DISTANCE FROM CALCUTTA,** by P. J. Barry. (2 E. 90th St. 534-5366. Closes Feb. 7.)

ERIC PALMA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LONG RUNS

BEAU JEST: Lamb's, 130 W. 44th St. 997-1780. . . . **BLUE MAN GROUP/TUBES:** Astor Place Theatre, 434 Lafayette St. 254-4370. . . . **CATS:** Winter Garden, Broadway at 50th St. 239-6200. . . . **CONVERSATIONS WITH MY FATHER:** Royale, 242 W. 45th St. 239-6200. . . . **CRAZY FOR YOU:** Shubert, 225 W. 44th St. 239-6200. . . . **FALSETTOS:** Golden, 252 W. 45th St. 239-6200. . . . **THE FANTASTICKS:** Sullivan Street Playhouse, 181 Sullivan St., at Bleecker St. 674-3838. . . . **FIVE GUYS NAMED MOE:** Eugene O'Neill, 230 W. 49th St. 239-6200. . . . **FOREVER PLAID:** Steve McGraw's, 158 W. 72nd St. 595-7400. . . . **GUYS AND DOLLS:** Martin Beck, 302 W. 45th St. 239-6200. . . . **JELLY'S LAST JAM:** Virginia, 245 W. 52nd St. 239-6200. . . . **LES MISÉRABLES:** Imperial, 249 W. 45th St. 239-6200. . . . **MISS SAIGON:** Broadway Theatre, Broadway at 53rd St. 239-6200. . . . **NUNSENSE:** Douglas Fairbanks, 432 W. 42nd St. 239-4321. . . . **PERFECT CRIME:** Theatre Four, 424 W. 55th St. 695-3401. . . . **THE PHANTOM OF THE OPERA:** Majestic, 245 W. 44th St. 239-6200. . . . **TONY N' TINA'S WEDDING:** St. John's Church, 81 Christopher St. 279-4200. . . . **THE WILL ROGERS FOLLIES:** Palace, Broadway at 47th St. 730-8200.

DANCE

Tap Roots

DANCERS needn't be dance historians: they can get all the history they need simply by being alive to the act of dancing. Sometimes, however, it happens that they luck into a time and place where they can see themselves as part of a tradition in the making. This seems to be the case currently for virtuoso tap dancers. As Gregory Hines and Brenda Bufalino observed in a recent public forum, tappers are enjoying a golden age now, in the sense that their field simultaneously contains master elders, stars in their prime, and dazzling Young Turks, all of whom appreciate each other's gifts and understand each other's place in the time line. This understanding can make for brilliantly unpredictable performances, where dancers take the sorts of imaginative risks that are routinely found in a community in which refined appreciation is a given.

Any New Yorker can be a part of that community. One way is by attending tap evenings around town. Another is by catching up with the past through historical films. On January 27, you can see an entire evening of them—six decades' worth—at Lincoln Center's Walter Reade Theatre. The program will include clips of the young Nicholas Brothers, the Berry Brothers, and the lightning-footed Bunny Briggs. (Call 875-5600 for information.) And on February 15, the New School is holding a seminar, with "impromptu performance," on a hundred years of tap-dance history, with Mr. Hines, Ms. Bufalino, Ira Bernstein, Savion Glover, Jimmy Slyde, and other guest artists. (Call 229-5684 for information.)

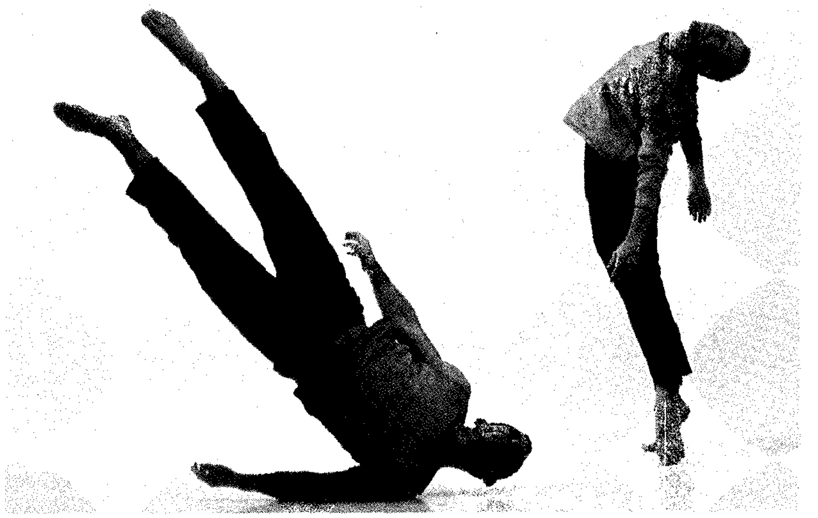
NEW YORK CITY BALLET—Jan. 20 at 8: "Serenade," "Firebird," and "JAZZ (Six Syncopated Movements)." . . ¶ Jan. 21 at 8: "La Source," "In Memory of. . .," and "JAZZ (Six Syncopated Movements)." . . ¶ Jan. 22 at 8: "Donizetti Variations," "Stravinsky Violin Concerto," and "Mercury." . . ¶ Jan. 23 at 2: "Swan Lake," "In Memory of. . .," and "Jeu de Cartes." . . ¶ Jan. 23 at 8: "Fearful Symmetries," "In Memory of. . .," and "Mercury." . . ¶ Jan. 24 at 1: "Swan Lake," "Firebird," and "Stravinsky Violin Concerto." . . ¶ Jan. 24 at 7: "The Goldberg Variations" and "Fearful Symmetries." . . ¶ Jan. 26 at 8: "Concerto Barocco," "In Memory of. . .," and "Fearful Symmetries." (New York State Theatre. 870-5570. Through Feb. 21.)

ZORONGO FLAMENCO—A troupe of thirteen flamenco dancers, musicians, and singers. The program consists of the full-length dance/theatre work "Flor," based on Jorge Amado's novel "Dona Flor and Her Two Husbands." (Joyce Theatre, 175 Eighth Ave., at 19th St. 242-0800. Jan. 20-22 at 8, Jan. 23 at 2 and 8, and Jan. 24 at 2 and 7:30.)

CHOREOGRAPHERS PROJECT—Eight members of the Martha Graham Dance Company present a program of their own choreography. (Marymount Manhattan Theatre, 221 E. 71st St. Jan. 21-23 at 8 and Jan. 24 at 3. For reservations, call 832-9166.)

TIM HADEL—In a program titled "If I Only Had a Brain," with five dancers. (Dance Theatre Workshop, 219 W. 19th St. 924-0077. Jan. 21-23 at 8 and Jan. 24 at 3.)

JENNIFER MONSON AND ZEENA PARKINS—The choreographer and the composer offer three pre-



Ralph Lemon Company at the Joyce

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mières: "Tackle Rock," "Hinge of Skin," and "Spat." Presented by Danspace Project. (St. Mark's In-the-Bouwerie, Second Ave. at 10th St. Jan. 21-24 at 8:30. For reservations, call 674-8194.)

"Y Not Tap"—A cabaret-type evening of tap dancing and singing. (Woodpeckers Tap Dance Center, 170 Mercer St. 219-8284. Jan. 22-23 at 8.)

Sarah Skaggs Dance Company—In "Higher Ground," a site-specific work. (St. Patrick's Youth Center, 268 Mulberry St. Jan. 23 at 10. For reservations, call 924-0077.)

Ralph Lemon Company—The opening performance of a one-week engagement that runs through Jan. 31. The program includes "Folkdances: Sextet," plus three New York premières: "Phrases Almost Biblical," "Their Eyes Rolled Back in Ecstasy," and "Their Eyes Rolled Back in Ecstasy/Solo." (Joyce Theatre, 175 Eighth Ave., at 19th St. 242-0800. Jan. 26 at 8.)

NIGHT LIFE

Hard Knocks

The instant you hear Vic Chesnutt, you will either love him or hate him, and you will never change your mind. The singer has made two albums, for an itsby-bitsy record label called Texas Hotel. Both records were produced by Michael Stipe, of R.E.M., and, if you're ready and willing, you'll find both to be full of a strange, stark, riveting kind of folk.

Chesnutt was in a drunk-driving wreck when he was eighteen. He's confined to a wheelchair now, and his right arm is partially paralyzed, which accounts for the blunt, scratchy sounds he bangs out on his acoustic guitar. The singer has a distinct Georgia drawl. He can chew up lyrics and spit them out, and he can grab hold of a word and never let go.

A young New York-based filmmaker named Peter Sillen has just completed a wistful documentary about the making of Chesnutt's new album, "West of Rome." The film finds Chesnutt in a typically funny, ornery mood, saying of his early sessions with Stipe, "All he did was order pizza, yak on the phone, and say 'Roll it.'" Chesnutt's concerts can be pretty raw—he'll start and stop a tune, he'll bait the audience, he'll even burp into the microphone—but once a song is in motion he's positively hypnotic. This week, the singer will perform at the Knitting Factory, the Rodeo Bar, and Maxwell's. It's not often that you can get this close to the real thing.

(A highly arbitrary listing, in which boldface type is used to pick out some of the more notable performers in town. . . . ¶ Call the phone number listed for performance schedules and, since musicians and night-club proprietors live complicated lives that are subject to last-minute change, to confirm engagements.)

Algonquin Hotel, 59 W. 44th St. (840-6800)—After four months, **andrea marcovicci's** cabaret juggernaut rumbles to a close in the old-timey environs of the Oak Room. Ms. Marcovicci is a skilled vocalist who gives particular care to lyrical content. The singer's program is titled "Double Torch." The late show on Fridays and Saturdays is "Just Kern." Dining.

Ballroom, 253 W. 28th St. (244-3005)—A cool green music hall that features a steady stream of international pop and cabaret stars, as well as the occasional drag queen. The Ballroom is also a tapas restaurant—if you haven't had dinner, you may never make it to the show. **leny andrade**, who's here through the end of this month, began life as a bossa-nova singer. In the sixties, however, she turned toward jazz and began honing her considerable scat-singing talents, which can be heard to good advantage on her latest album, "Terra de Ajuricaba."

Birdland, 2745 Broadway, at 105th St. (749-2228)—This northern restaurant-bar, an airy two-tiered space with pastel walls and potted greenery, is a shade too slick for Columbia students but just right for post-collegiate jazz fans. The name is taken from the long-gone midtown pleasure dome that featured Bird himself. This week's performers include **tanareid** (Jan. 22-23), the **ned otter** quartet (Jan. 24), the **melissa slocum** trio (Jan. 25), and **johnnie jones** (Jan. 26). Dining.

Blue Note, 131 W. 3rd St., near Sixth Ave. (475-8592)—Jazz, mirrors, a gift shop, and, of course, those incredible shrinking aisles that turn a mid-set dash to the rest room into something of a steeplechase. Trumpet virtuoso **freddie hubbard** is in action through Jan. 24, when Milt Jackson and others will join him to honor Dizzy Gillespie with an all-night jam session. The gravel-voiced singer and pianist **dr. john** gets started on Jan. 26. Dining.

Bottom Line, 15 W. 4th St., at Mercer St. (228-6300)—A great black loft that's jammed with row after row of tables—it looks a little like the site of a standardized test. Despite the cramped quarters, though, the Bottom Line is an easy, comfortable place to take in a folk or rock show. Pianist **liz story**, who has just released a collection of standards, titled "My Foolish Heart," performs on a bill with **laurel massé** on Jan. 25. And **vital information** is here on Jan. 26. Burgers, fries, and other things to make your heart beat faster.

Bradley's, 70 University Pl., at 11th St. (228-6440)—The art collection in this neighborhood restaurant, bar, and jazz club is a curator's worst nightmare. It seems to have been accrued, haphazardly, over a long period of time, and includes everything from portraits of jazz greats to framed cartoons to a rendering of a naval battle. The works jostle each other on the mahogany walls like prisoners in a holding cell. Fortunately, the musicians who gather round the Steinway each night are usually more harmonious. **bobby watson, james williams,** and **david williams** work out through Jan. 23. Dining.

Café Sin-é, 122 St. Marks Pl. (982-0370)—Don't be misled by the sleepy, hole-in-the-wall atmosphere of this bohemian little Irish café, or by the fact that the place has no stage and no music schedule. While patrons have been writing in journals, rolling cigarettes, or lingering over their Rolling Rocks, some pretty fine musicians have turned up and tuned up: Sinéad O'Connor, Marianne Faithfull, and Luka Bloom, to name a few.

Carlyle Hotel, Madison Ave. at 76th St. (744-1600)—The **modern jazz quartet**—four distinguished gentlemen in gray slacks, navy blazers, and regimental ties—is providing dress-up jazz at this hub of civility through Jan. 23. Their jazz is as smooth and complex as a fine Bordeaux, but, hey, after forty years, can these guys really be improvising? Three of the four—vibraphonist Milt Jackson, pianist John Lewis, and bassist Percy Heath—have played in the ensemble since 1952, and by that time Jackson and Lewis had already worked together on and off for six years as members of the late Dizzy Gillespie's orchestra. (And percussionist Mickey Roker—substituting during Connie Kay's leave of absence—was a full-time Gillespian throughout the seventies.) They add up to a cool combination in which Lewis articulates finely etched melodies over exquisite voicings, against which Jackson's occasional outbursts

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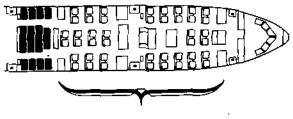

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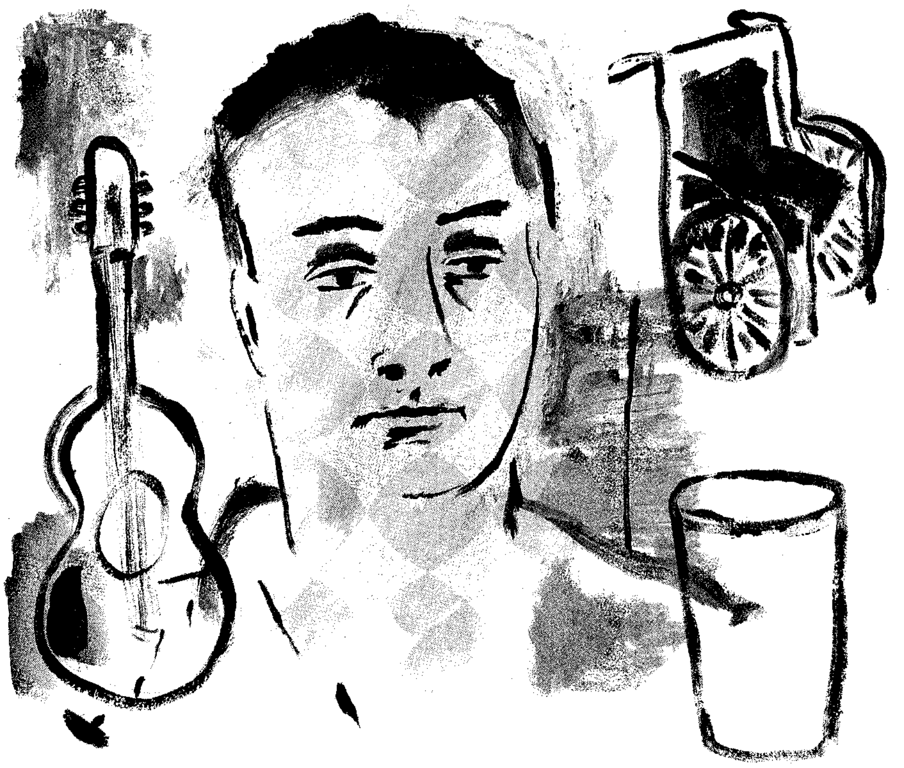
seem all the more astonishing in their high-flare virtuosity. BARBARA COOK comes in for five nights beginning on Jan. 26. . . . ¶ Across the hall, in Bemelmans Bar, pianist and singer BARBARA CARROLL winds up an engagement on Jan. 23. It's last call to spend an evening in her charming company—until it's autumn in New York, that is. RONNY WHYTE takes over the piano bench beginning on Jan. 26. Kurt Wieting provides the tunes on Mondays.

CBGB & OMFUG, 315 Bowery, at Bleecker St. (982-4052)—Rock and roll always sounds best in a dump, which may be why this legendary club is still thriving: the management has had the good sense not to renovate. In recent years, CB's has become something of an empire; the club is now flanked by a pizzeria/boutique on one side and a bar/performance space on the other—all your shopping needs taken care of in one convenient location. FEAR takes over on Jan. 20. Iron Prostate is in on Jan. 22, and Night of Misanthropy will play on Jan. 23.

CLEOPATRA'S NEEDLE RESTAURANT, 2485 Broadway, at 92nd St. (769-6969)—Jazz and Middle Eastern cuisine. Why didn't someone think of it sooner? Guitarist RON JACKSON and bassist LONNIE PLAXICO are at work here Jan. 22-23. Dining.

DAN LYNCH, 221 Second Ave., at 14th St. (677-0911)—Outside Dan Lynch, you'll come across a lot of suspicious characters who'll claim to know you; inside you'll find a pupil-dilating brown-on-brown bar. The place brightens up considerably at ten, with a variety of live blues, including vamps of the "put on your red dress" variety.

DUPLEX, 61 Christopher St., at Seventh Ave. (255-5438)—A sitcom waiting to happen. Everyone is a star here—the pianist, the bartender, the waiters, and the audience. Pop standards are sung/shouted, usually with altered, risqué lyrics; wisecracks are fired across the room; and everyone laughs too hard. Upstairs, there's a quieter bar and a cabaret, where you'll find a variety of performers nightly.



Vic Chesnutt at the Knitting Factory, Maxwell's, and the Rodeo Bar

KAREN CALDICOTT

EAGLE TAVERN, 355 W. 14th St. (924-0275)—Where swordfish leap on almost every wall. Where a cat with black and white spots sometimes walks the length of the bar. Where barbirds stare at football on the tube. And where, between the Sinatra and Streisand songs that emanate from the jukebox, one can often hear snatches of Irish music floating in from the bright back room. Mickey Kelly and Mike Lavery will be singing songs and telling stories on Jan. 22.

FAT TUESDAY'S, 190 Third Ave., at 17th St. (533-7900)—The seating arrangement in this long, narrow, red-velvet-and-mirror-walled basement makes flying coach seem roomy; nevertheless, it's one of the city's top jazz spots—thanks largely to the club's talent bookers. But watch your head. PHIL WOODS leads a quintet through Jan. 24. Woods, an alto saxophonist, has been a regular on the jazz circuit since the fifties. He's a fiery, lyrical soloist and one of the finest bebop-rooted artists still showing up for work. KENNY BARRON'S group gets started on Jan. 26. On Mondays, guitarist-inventor LES PAUL leads a trio. Dining.

J'S, 2581 Broadway, at 97th St. (666-3600)—An unpretentious second-floor jazz retreat where a bandleader was once heard saying, "I wanna introduce my drummer first on account of because he has to go put a quarter in the meter." The schedule, in part, is: Bud Burridge/Ed Palmero quintet (Jan. 21), RANDA MC NAMARA quintet (Jan. 23), FRANK VIGNOLA trio (Jan. 24), and BUCKY PIZZARELLI and HOWARD ALDEN (Jan. 26).

KNICKERBOCKER, 33 University Pl., at 9th St. (228-8490)—Brass rails, vintage posters, Hirschfeld drawings, a menu full of items like bangers and mash, and a piano. Knickerbocker is an airy, good-spirited place and, while music often takes a back seat to conversation, some able piano-and-bass teams turn up regularly. DARRELL GRANT is at the piano on Jan. 20; bassist SANTI DEBRIANO joins him Jan. 22-23.

KNITTING FACTORY, 47 E. Houston St., near Mulberry St. (219-3055)—Situated in a neighborhood that boasts the Puck Building to the west and a host of windshield washers to the east, this modest space provides a forum for free-thinking musicians. Beat and melody are optional, "music" and "noise" relative terms. On Jan. 20, VIC CHESNUTT, HONUS WAGNER, and the LAURELS will perform. Earlier in the evening, Violent Femme GORDON GANO hosts "New Songs in a Staged Reading." BLUESLAND, FAITH, and DADAHDOODAHDA appear on Jan. 22; DAVID THOMAS, IRA KAPLAN, and GARO YELLIN are here on Jan. 23; DELIA SCAFE performs on Jan. 25; and NORA YORK turns up on Jan. 26.

MANNY'S CAR WASH, 1558 Third Ave., at 87th St. (369-2583)—A bright spot on the little-heralded Upper East Side club scene. Don't go expecting to be sprayed with soapy water and massaged by large brushes: the fluorescent sign outside is the only car-wash reference. Inside, the place looks like an adman's idea of a blues bar. BOBBY RADCLIFF is here on Jan. 20. Kim Simmonds and the Savoy Brown blues band will be in on Jan. 21, and the Fins swim in for two nights on Jan. 22.

MAXWELL'S, 1039 Washington St., Hoboken. (1-201 798-4064)—A plain blue back room whose far wall is decorated with round things: a Frisbee, some singles, a drum head, and the woofer from a speaker cabinet, to name a few. The beer of choice here is Rolling Rock—by a landslide—and the crowd may make you feel as if you have a midterm to study for, but many of the bands that play here today will be playing somewhere more expensive tomorrow. This week: DAVID THOMAS, GARY LUCAS, and VIC CHESNUTT are here on Jan. 22; RUN WESTY RUN, 700 MILES, and THE GOD MACHINE perform on Jan. 23.

MICHAEL'S PUB, 211 E. 55th St. (758-2272)—The Jelly Roll Morton tribute that's been in session since October has been extended indefinitely. VERNEL BAGNERIS portrays the self-proclaimed inventor of jazz with elegance, verve, and compassion, providing an intimate counterbalance to the psychologically tortured depiction currently being purveyed on Broadway. Bagneris bases his script on interviews that Jelly Roll taped in the thirties, and intersperses virtuosic renditions of sixteen numbers—all packed into little more than an hour. Pianist Morten Gunnar Larsen complements him capably at the keyboard.

NEW MUSIC CAFÉ, 380 Canal St. (941-0900)—Located at the crossroads of New Jersey, Brooklyn, and SoHo—an excellent place to get hit by a truck—this restaurant-bar is likely to contain visitors from all three. It's a big, high-ceilinged, broad-windowed place, where conversations tend to be boisterous and the bands even more so.

RAINBOW & STARS, 30 Rockefeller Plaza. (632-5000)—Sky-high: both the room and your bill. But it's good value, since MARY CLEERE HARAN is currently in residence. Unlike club singers whose patter is a punishment to be endured between numbers, Ms. Haran is revealed through her aperçus to be literate, astute, and entertaining. Her singing is every bit as fine, and her repertoire—Mercer, Arlen, and other American classics—is hard to top. It all adds up to a masterly evening in which the emotions of an earlier era are respectfully maintained while being informed and enriched by a wry, intelligent modernity. Dining. Closed Mondays.

RED BLAZER TOO, 349 W. 46th St. (262-3112)—A place where a fella and a gal can put on the feedbag, get a little tight, and cut a rug. Mondays belong to the Smith Street Jazz Society, Tuesdays and Fridays to VINCE GIORDANO AND THE NIGHTHAWKS, Thursdays to Stan Rubin's big band, and Saturdays to Bob Cantwell and His Stompers. The Jack Twomey big band and the Dale Chandler group are both here on Jan. 20.

RITZ, 254 W. 54th St. (541-8900)—This midtown rock emporium hasn't been much of a player in New York's night club scene of late. However, the Ritz's new owners are hoping to turn things around with, among other things, draft beer, more diverse bookings, a new supper-club-style side room, and a security staff less intent on getting in everybody's face. MOLLY HATCHET and BLACK OAK ARKANSAS share a bill on Jan. 21. PETE FORNATALE comes in on Jan. 24.

RODEO BAR, 375 Third Ave., at 27th St. (683-6500)—A Western theme bar, attached to a Mexican restaurant. You get walls designed to simulate a log cabin; a buffalo head that blows smoke through its nostrils; a horse trailer that's been converted into a bar; peanuts for eating and, occasionally, throwing. But wait, there's more: a TV that plays tapes of rodeos, New Mexico memorabilia, and live music nightly—country, blues, folk, rock, hillbilly. **VIC CHESNUTT** will be here on Jan. 21.

SWEET BASIL, 88 Seventh Ave. S., at Bleecker St. (242-1785)—One seldom sees jazz musicians leaning back to back as they kick out the jams, or craning their necks to harmonize into a mike. That's not to say that they don't interact onstage, but they're usually more subtle about it than rockers are. The nod, the glance, the faint smile are more common gestures, and this brown-toned ski chalet of a jazz club is a fine place to study such group dynamics. The **DON GROLNICK** quintet works out through Jan. 24. An electrified big band belonging to trumpeter **MILES EVANS** is in action on Mondays. Dining.

TOMPKINS SQUARE RESTAURANT, 141 Avenue A, at 9th St. (260-4798)—A homey night spot from which you can watch East Village funkazoids walk by in their platform shoes and their Cat-in-the-Hat head gear. The restaurant is directly across from Tompkins Square Park, and it's split down the middle to separate those who drink from those who eat *and* drink. The menu is vegetarian-friendly. The atmosphere is a bit old-fashioned. Just now, there are some white Christmas lights strung up over the bar; there's an informal art show on the walls; and jazz outfits are on the stage Thursdays through Saturdays.

TRAMPS, 45 W. 21st St. (727-7788)—A broad, spacious, and agreeable club, located near what was once called Ladies' Mile but might now be termed the pool-hall district. The pillared, loftlike room is decorated in a hodgepodge, vaguely Bourbon Street manner, and sight lines are above average. **SLEEPY LA BEEF,** of whom it has been said "He makes Johnny Cash look like a choirboy," will be here on Jan. 23. LaBeef, a rockabilly cult figure who has been performing since the fifties, is six feet six, weighs nearly three hundred pounds, and likes to wear a black ten-gallon hat; his deep voice hits you like a sonic boom, and he tosses off sharp salvos from a guitar that in his hands looks like a matchstick. La Beef will open for **NATHAN & THE ZYDECO CHA CHAS.**

VILLAGE VANGUARD, 178 Seventh Ave. S., at 11th St. (255-4037)—The late Max Gordon, who founded this holiest of jazz shrines in 1935, once described the club's early patrons as a mix of "poets, W.P.A. writers, hustlers, broads on the make, and moochers." Guitarist **LARRY CORYELL** and his quartet are in charge through Jan. 24. **DAVID MURRAY** begins work on Jan. 26, with **DON PULLEN, ANDREW CYRILLE,** and **BILL WHITE.** Murray, an influential, free-jazz-leaning tenor saxophonist with a combustive attack, was a co-founder of the World Saxophone Quartet. The **VANGUARD JAZZ ORCHESTRA** holds sway on Mondays.

WETLANDS, 161 Hudson St. (966-4225)—A relatively young club that has already managed to make a scene. Wetlands is usually thought of as a Deadhead hangout, but the club has also been the launching pad for a generation of young New York bands like Blues Traveler and the Spin Doctors. Shows here can be absurdly sweaty and tight—the club seems to have a hard time turning people away—and it can be hard to get a view of the stage. Still, Wetlands is such a maze of a place that there's always some mellow corner to retire to. **CHOOSY MOTHERS** will take the stage on Jan. 25. **ZEN TRICKSTERS** will be here on Jan. 26.

ZINNO, 126 W. 13th St. (924-5182)—One of those snazzy, awninged eateries you've seen nestled amid brownstones in the Village and always wondered about. The food is Italian, the atmosphere is pastels and soft lights, and the musicians, who set up in a room between the bar and the dining room, are first-rate. Pianist **JANE JARVIS** and bassist **MILT HINTON** team up through Jan. 23. The week beginning Jan. 25 belongs to pianist **JUNIOR MANCE** and bassist **MARTY RIVERA.** Closed Sundays.

EDGE OF NIGHT LIFE

BOY, do they love bell-bottoms in Los Angeles. Kick pleats flap across the floor til 4 A.M. out here. (Bar curfews are being flouted nowadays, though no one is exactly admitting it.) Alas, if only all the billowing and furling along Melrose could bring back some of the old love-power. Still, form without substance is better than nothing. And nowhere does such rampant retropassion look better than in the storefront temples enshrining this city's desire to return to a time when everyone was singing "Good Day, Sunshine" and you could always see clear to the beach. Coffeehouses are now more common than newsstands or broken street phones. Surfwear is banished, blonds are gone—suddenly, it's as if everyone had done a doctoral dissertation on Audrey Hepburn in "Funny Face."

At Big & Tall Books (7311 Beverly Boulevard), precisely scruffed patrons—dark-haired, denim-clad, and wearing wire-rims—peruse *UtneReaders*, skim through the *New York Review of Books*, or inspect stacks of arty fiction placed alongside *Mad* magazine's best-of compendium. At The Living Room (110 South La Brea), a young woman has her chocolate *biscotto* snatched from her for asking, "Who's Warren Christopher?" But caffeine addicts shouldn't be fooled by an ordinary restaurant/bar named The T. Room (5657 Melrose Avenue). Given how fast the scene changes in L.A., though, doubtless it will drear out before you get up the nerve to try on another pair of hip-huggers.

IN ANOTHER CATEGORY—PERFORMANCE ART, ETC.

ICE CAPADES—Dorothy Hamill, Christopher Bowman, and Cathy Turner star in this year's "Made in America" edition of the ice show. (Madison Square Garden. 465-6000. Jan. 21 at 7:30; Jan. 22 at 10:30 A.M. and 7:30; Jan. 23 at 11 A.M., 3, and 7:30; and Jan. 24 at 1 and 5:30.)

"SIMPATICO"—The Otrabanda Company's production of a dance-theatre piece written by Roger Babb and choreographed by Rocky Bornstein. (Downtown Art Co., 64 E. 4th St. 732-1227. Jan. 20-23 at 8 and Jan. 24 at 5. Through Jan. 31.)

KYLE DECAMP—In "Ladyland," a solo performance piece about ten women who knew Jimi Hendrix. (Artists Space, 223 West Broadway. 226-3970. Jan. 21-24 at 8.)

TOY THEATRE FESTIVAL—Four contemporary, puppet-related works, including "The Ash King," by Janie Geiser, and "Ice Maiden Circus," by the Cosmopolitan Girls. (Theatre for the New City, 155 First Ave., at 10th St. 254-1109. Jan. 21-23 at 8 and Jan. 24 at 3. Through Jan. 31.)

"POINT OF DEBARKATION"—A work by John Jesurun that incorporates puppetry, dance, music, video, and film. (La Mama Annex, 66 E. 4th St. 475-7710. Jan. 22-24 at 7:30. Through Feb. 7.)

CHRIS DURANG & DAWNE COMEDY HOUR—The playwright and his backup singers, as well as fab guest artists, in a weekly lounge act. (Caroline's Comedy Club, Broadway at 49th St. 757-4100. Mondays at 8; through Feb. 1.)

P.S. 122—Jan. 21-24 at 7:30: Actress/performance artist Lisa Kron recounts "101 Humiliating Stories." Through Jan. 31. . . . ¶ Jan. 21-24 at 9: Charles Dennis and R. Justice Allen. (150 First Ave., at 9th St. 477-5288.)

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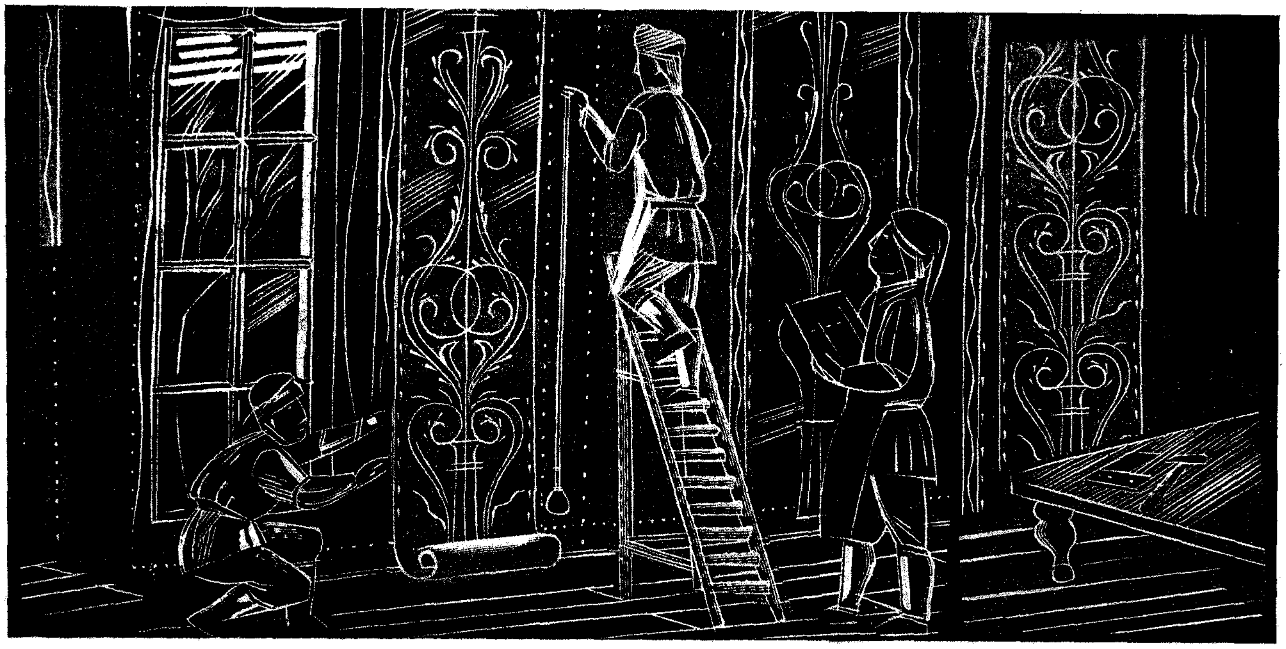

"From Background to Foreground" at the Cooper-Hewitt Museum

JONATHAN GIBBS

ART

Stagestruck

FOREVER at work designing sets in recent seasons for the operatic stage, David Hockney has, for the first time in several years, produced a tightly focussed group of easel-scale paintings (Emmerich, 41 East 57th Street; through February 13). The artist, who has given these twenty-six works the ineffably Clouseauish collective title "Some Very New Paintings" (individually, "The First V.N. Painting," "The Second V.N. Painting," etc.), seems, in his coy-concrete way, to be announcing a renewed appetite for the medium. Whatever else may be said—and Hockney's infantilism and inventive adorableness have been known to grate—the current show should interest all discerning students of either painting or stagecraft.

Every one of these loud, animated paintings is, in fact, a fantastic stage set full of countless allusions to modern art and the School of Paris. They're also as rambunctiously flat as a clown's leering face, and made up of shapes defined by color and of crude motifs dabbed or scored into wet paint. Playful and unself-consciously Matisse-minded, they are also horrid. Stage blood seems to pulse through Hockney's veins.

MUSEUMS AND LIBRARIES

METROPOLITAN MUSEUM, Fifth Ave. at 82nd St.—"Fashion and History: A Dialogue" is the first installation in the redesigned Costume Institute. . . . ¶ "Drawing for Design" includes sketches and finished pieces by designers, architects, and artists from Christopher Dresser to Robert Venturi. . . . ¶ "The Royal City of Susa: Ancient Near Eastern Treasures in the Louvre." Two hundred works in copper, bronze, stone, and clay. Through March 7. . . . ¶ The third-century works in "Loma Negra, A Peruvian Lord's Tomb" range from small gilt nose and ear ornaments to large headdresses and masks. . . . ¶ Twenty-five examples of elaborately inscribed and decorated medieval Islamic garments. Through March 14. . . . ¶ An installation of works from the museum's large collection of Italian majolica and Venetian glass. . . . ¶ Two series of color photographs by Shomei Tomatsu: one depicts *Sakura*, or cherry-blossom time; the other, flotsam and jetsam washed up on a beach. Through Jan. 31. . . . ¶ The Robert Wood Johnson, Jr., Gallery has been renovated, and for the first time will be a venue for the permanent display of drawings, prints, and photographs. (Open Tuesdays through Sundays, 9:30 to 5:15, and Friday and Saturday evenings until 8:45.)

MUSEUM OF MODERN ART, 11 W. 53rd St.—Since many of the museum's major works have been on reciprocal loan to other museums in exchange for Matisses, the museum has chosen to reinstall a number of its remaining paintings, sculptures, and other objects in a nonchronological fashion. There are several informative passages, such as Picasso's sexually charged "Demoiselles" and de Kooning's fierce "Woman I" displayed next to Louise Bourgeois' defiant, ironically erect "Sleeping Figure." Through Feb. 21. . . . ¶ "The Artist and the Book in Twentieth-Century Italy." Through Feb. 16. (Open daily, except Wednesdays, 11 to 6, and Thursday evenings until 9.)

GUGGENHEIM MUSEUM, Fifth Ave. at 89th St.—Selections from the permanent collection are on view. (Open daily, except Thursdays, 10 to 8.)

GUGGENHEIM MUSEUM SOHO, 575 Broadway—Works that Robert Rauschenberg made between 1949 and 1954, before the appearance of the groundbreaking combines. Through Jan. 25. (Open daily, except Tuesdays, 11 to 6, and Thursday, Friday, and Saturday evenings until 10.)

WHITNEY MUSEUM OF AMERICAN ART, Madison Ave. at 75th St.—Agnes Martin didn't achieve her mature style until the early sixties, when she was in her late forties. It is the paradox of her career that she has made soft, delicate paintings in a rigid grid format. Within her narrow vocabulary, Martin explores infinite variation. Though each painting is a perfect distillation of her oeuvre, the more you see, the more you want to see. Through Jan. 31. . . . ¶ "The Geometric Tradition in American Art, 1930-1990" provides a historic context for the Martin show with work by Ellsworth Kelly, Ad Reinhardt, Donald Judd, and Burgoyne Diller, among others. Through Feb. 14. . . . ¶ A retrospective of paintings by Jean-Michel Basquiat. Through Feb. 14. . . . ¶ "Photography: Expanding a Collection" includes works by Cindy Sherman, Robert Mapplethorpe, Sally Mann, and Larry Clark. Through Feb. 21. (Open Wednesdays, and Fridays through Sundays, 11 to 6; Thursdays, 1 to 8.)

BROOKLYN MUSEUM, Eastern Parkway—"Frédéric Bazille: Prophet of Impressionism." The virtuosity of Bazille (1841-70) as an Impressionist is perhaps most evident in "The Rose Laurels," a small painting of flowering bushes, which, though signed, is obviously unfinished. There are, however, at least three outstanding Bazilles in Brooklyn. "The Improvised Field Hospital" is a portrait of Monet, as *homme fatal*, in bed after a minor accident, while "Fisherman with a Net" and "Summer Scene (Bathers)" are not only the cool Bazille's most impassioned works but also bracing homoerotic retorts to everyone else's *déjeuners sur l'herbe*. Through Jan. 24. . . . ¶ Sixty sculptures by Auguste Rodin are in the Cantor Gallery. Among the works here are two independent pieces from "The Gates of Hell"; maquettes, studies, and four full-scale figures from "The Burghers of Calais"; and several versions of "Balzac.". . . ¶ "Dame of the Narrows" (1976), a sculpture of the Staten Island ferry arriving at the Manhattan terminal, by Red Grooms, Mimi Gross, and the Ruckus Construction Company, is on view in the lobby. (Open Wednesdays through Sundays, 10 to 5.)

COOPER-HEWITT MUSEUM, Fifth Ave. at 91st St.—"From Background to Foreground" examines Jean-Baptiste Réveillon's eighteenth-century wallpaper designs and includes samples of the arabesque pattern, woodblocks, paper, pigment, and decorative objects. Through April 6. . . . ¶ "The Power of Maps." Navigating your way through this huge show of more than four hundred maps (the earliest is from 1500 B.C.) can seem like a daunting task. But be adventurous, and you'll find Native American star charts, Italian globes, Aboriginal "Dreaming" maps, survey maps of the Pyramids, and much more. Through March 7. . . . ¶ "Revolution, Life, and Labor," a show of two hundred and fifty Soviet porcelain plates, vessels, and sculptures, from the Bolshevik Revolution to *glasnost*. Through April 6 . . . . ¶ A show of drawings, prints, textiles, and wall coverings by designers and architects who have died of AIDS. Through Feb. 28. (Open Tuesdays, 10 to 9, with no admission charge after 5; Wednesdays through Saturdays, 10 to 5; Sundays, noon to 5.)

Frick Collection, 1 E. 70th St.—An exhibition of furniture from the French Renaissance along with Old Master prints and drawings. (Open daily, except Mondays, 10 to 6; Sundays, 1 to 6.)

Morgan Library, 29 E. 36th St.—"Lincoln: 'A House Divided' " is a display of the earliest-known draft of the Great Emancipator's doctrine opposing slavery. Through Feb. 28. . . . ¶ A large show of medieval and Renaissance illuminated manuscripts from the Breslauer Collection is on view. . . . ¶ "Printers and Miniaturists" shows off the finest in late-fifteenth-century Venetian illuminated books. . . . ¶ In "Thomas Jefferson: Tranquil Pursuits and Stormy Politics," one can see "Summary View of the Rights of America" (1774), his first published work; the library's copy of the first printing of the Declaration of Independence; personal letters to Elbridge Gerry (later v.p. under Madison); and letters to his daughter Martha. (Open Tuesdays through Saturdays, 10:30 to 5; Sundays, 1 to 5.)

New York Public Library, Fifth Ave. at 42nd St.—Four hundred years' worth of prints and photographs portraying Native Americans. Included are works by Timothy O'Sullivan, George Catlin, Edward S. Curtis, and Gertrude Käsebier. Through Jan. 30. (Third Floor Gallery.) . . . ¶ On view in the Berg Collection are fifty manuscripts, including fragments from "Oliver Twist," "Tropic of Cancer," "To the Lighthouse," and "Ada." Through March 13. (Open Tuesdays and Wednesdays, 11 to 6; Thursdays through Saturdays, 10 to 6.)

Studio Museum in Harlem, 144 W. 125th St.—"Wifredo Lam and His Contemporaries, 1938-52." More than a hundred paintings by a Cuban modernist of African, Chinese, and Spanish ancestry. Lam was an early multiculti, the first artist to turn the sometimes condescending primitivism of modern art on its ear. (Open Wednesdays through Fridays, 10 to 5; Saturdays and Sundays, 1 to 6.)

GALLERIES—UPTOWN

(Unless otherwise noted, galleries are open Tuesdays through Saturdays from around 10 or 11 to between 5 and 6.)

Peter Cain—In Cain's paintings, automobiles like the Mercedes 500SL and the Bugatti EP 110 appear as de-luxe mutants. The original showroom images of the cars have been sliced up on the artist's drawing board and reassembled. These disconcerting contractions are then projected onto canvas, rendered in oil (with some taped edges), and set against sleek, painterly grounds. In one outstanding work, the largest in the show, a blue bumper hits the road upside down, in a highway landscape of refracted planes in fruity pinks and peaches. Through Jan. 28. (Marks, 1018 Madison Ave., at 79th St.)

Damien Hirst—For his first New York show, this young British artist has lined the gallery with pharmacy cases filled with medications for every illness imaginable. In the center, in a limp appropriation of Joseph Beuys, he has placed a large bug-zapper surrounded by bowls of honeycomb as "a primary symbol of social organization." The piece is not without a certain intelligence, but it is so literal and grandiose, and so full of neo-Conceptual pretense, that it is ultimately disappointing. Through Jan. 28. (Cohen, 1018 Madison Ave., at 79th St. Open Mondays.)

Short List—**hannelore baron,** Schlesinger, 24 E. 73rd St. (through Feb. 27); **ed ruscha,** Gagosian, 980 Madison Ave., at 76th St. (through Feb. 27); **pietro tempesta,** Salander-O'Reilly, 20 E. 79th St. (open Mondays, through Jan. 23); **john walker,** Knoedler, 19 E. 70th St. (through Feb. 13).

GALLERIES—57TH STREET AREA

"Josef Hoffmann: Designs"—This gem of a show owes much of its success to a well-paced installation. Though there are hundreds of

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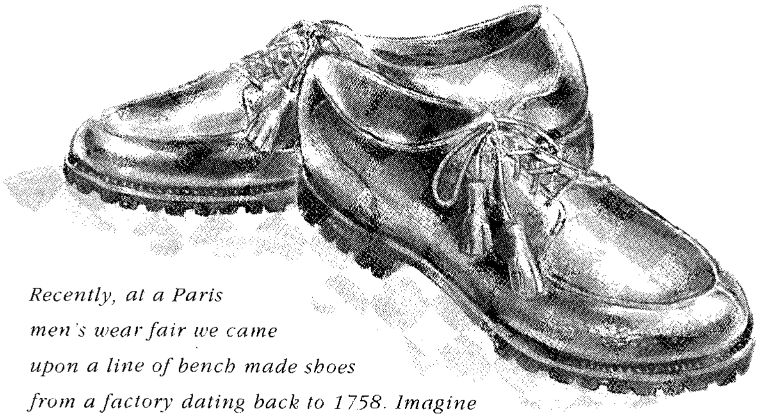

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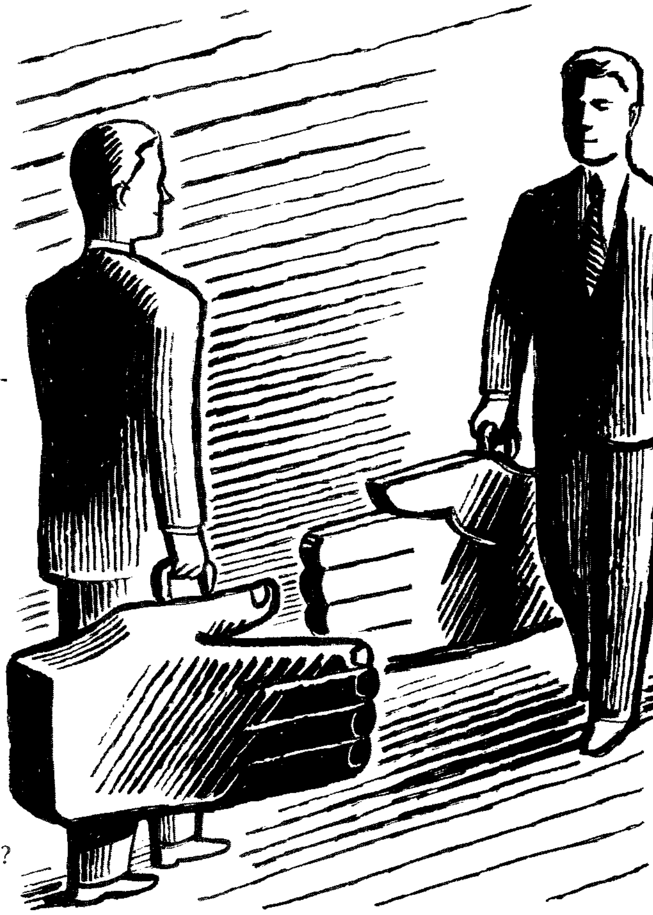

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ART–Cont'd

objects and drawings in this assembly, it remains true to Hoffmann's light, unerringly elegant touch and his concentration on detail. Through Jan. 23. (IBM Gallery of Science and Art, Madison Ave. at 56th St.)

Giorgio Morandi (1890-1964)—This Italian Buddha of existential art brought new meaning to the still-life. His tight arrangements of bowls and bottles, which preoccupied him for virtually his entire artistic life, are always the same yet always different. They somehow exhibit the lessons of Cézanne and the Cubists while seeming to take great pleasure in turning their back on modernist conventions. Several excellent still-lifes are on display, as well as a fascinating painting of a courtyard; it is as reassuringly static as the other works, but also alive with light. Through Jan. 30. (Baldacci-Daverio, 41 E. 57th St.)

Short List—**milton avery,** Borgenicht, 724 Fifth Ave., at 57th St. (through Feb. 13); **stuart davis,** Ulysses, 41 E. 57th St. (through Jan. 23); **nobu fukui,** Marisa del Re, 41 E. 57th St. (through Feb. 6); **hans hofmann,** Emmerich, 41 E. 57th St. (through Feb. 13); **lee krasner,** Robert Miller, 41 E. 57th St. (through Jan. 30); **leonid lerman,** McKee, 745 Fifth Ave., at 57th St. (through Feb. 3); **melissa meyer** and **tristano di robilant,** Holly Solomon, 724 Fifth Ave., at 57th St. (through Feb. 13); **zoran music,** Krugier, 41 E. 57th St. (through Jan. 30); **fairfield porter,** De Nagy, 41 W. 57th St. (through Jan. 23); **max weber,** Forum, 745 Fifth Ave., at 57th St. (through Jan. 23); **lawrence weiner,** Marian Goodman, 24 W. 57th St. (through Feb. 13); **neil welliver,** Marlborough, 40 W. 57th St. (through Jan. 30); **sandy winters** (through Jan. 30) and **maryan** (through Feb. 27), Frumkin-Adams, 50 W. 57th St.

GALLERIES—SoHo

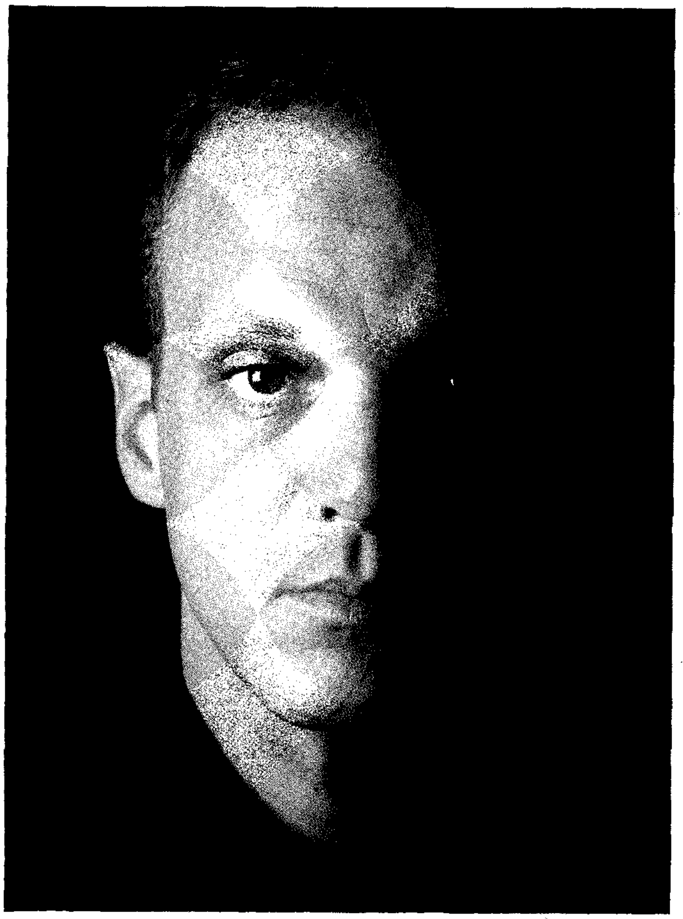
Dale Chihuly—Probably the only glassmaker accepted into the highest precincts of art, Chihuly has seemed bored recently, and in the current show he goes to great extremes to reverse that perception. He has taken the biggest, grossest blossoms—like birds of paradise—and made them bigger and grosser in glass. Something appealing happens in the process. But he has placed them in enormous glass vases, which are of beautiful, highly sophisticated form, delicate where the flowers are clunky. The vases in turn are decorated in the most garish *façon de Venise* swirls and fairy dusts, with marvellous passages but an over-all cheapness. Through Jan. 23. (Cowles, 420 West Broadway.)

Gerhard Richter—Two small canvases, and a goodly sampling of works on paper from the past several years. The abstract watercolors are quite beautiful, but especially engaging are some small pencil drawings that map out the anatomy of the artist's large abstract paintings. There is also a group of mysterious black-and-white photographic works comprising murky multiple exposures of the artist in his studio. Through Jan. 30. (Nolan-Eckman, 560 Broadway.)

Andy Warhol (1930-87)—A fascinating show of an essentially unknown body of work. Made shortly before he died, these paintings illustrate the two sides of Warhol: the detached, cool materialist, and the less frequently glimpsed visionary. They also show the influence of the artist's collaboration with Jean-Michel Basquiat—not just in their style (the anatomical chartings, the writing, even the very orthography) but in their youthful vigor and self-obsession. Through Jan. 30. (Gagosian, 136 Wooster St.)

"Fever"—The nonprofit exhibition center Exit Art featured multicultural programs long before they became fashionable, and it is just beginning to reap the rewards of its prescience. At a time when many galleries are closing and nonprofits are trying to figure out how to make it in the nineties, Exit Art is ushering in the Clinton era by tripling its space and renaming itself Exit Art/The First World. The moment is being celebrated with a big group show of forty-eight young artists, with totems, altars, prison cells, and healing stations—a gently chaotic installation. The late-seventies spirit of Colab is everywhere, although this show is more racially and sexually integrated. It is probably a disservice with this sort of exhibition to try to single out individual artists; over all, it is an earnest, spirited affair in a space that has a terrific energy, of a sort that has been absent from most big SoHo group shows of recent years. The new Exit Art also offers a café and a shopful of artist-designed housewares. The future promises a second exhibition space, a fashion hall, and a theatre. Through Jan. 30. (548 Broadway.)

Short List—**james biederman** and **susan leopold,** Weber, 142 Greene St. (through Feb. 6); **pier consagra,** Toll, 146 Greene St. (through Feb. 6); **sasà giusto,** Ala, 560 Broadway (through Feb. 6); **dana gordon** and **joyce robbins,** 55 Mercer Street Gallery (through Jan. 30); **jasper johns,** Castelli, 420 West Broadway (through Feb. 5); **mary kelly** and **david diao,** Postmasters, 80 Greene St. (through Feb. 6); **wolfgang laib,** Sperone Westwater, 121 Greene St. (through Feb. 27); **frank moore,** Sperone Westwater, 142 Greene St. (through Feb. 6); **david moriarty** and **katherine bradford,** Beitzel, 102 Prince St. (through Feb. 6); **carl ostendarp,** Gorney, 100 Greene St. (through Feb. 6); **panamarenko,** Feldman, 31 Mercer St. (through Feb. 13); **charles searles,** Kelly, 591 Broadway (through Feb. 2); **kevin sullivan,** Fiction-Nonfiction, 21 Mercer St. (through Jan. 28); **betty woodman,** Protetch, 560 Broadway (through Feb. 13); **lisa yuskavage,** Koury, 89 Greene St. (through Jan. 30); **martin wong,** P.P.O.W, 532 Broadway (through Feb. 6); **joe zucker,** Hirschl & Adler Modern, 420 West Broadway (through Feb. 13); **michael zwack,** Marcus, 578 Broadway (through Jan. 30).



Self-portrait by David Seidner

PHOTOGRAPHY

Portraits of the Artists

A sense of focus and of individual will glorifies the little photography room at Robert Miller (41 East 57th Street; through January 30), thanks to the show of David Seidner's work that's currently there. It is a clean and exacting installation of Seidner's black-and-white portraits of contemporary artists, most of whom are very well known, and all of whom are captured with an intensely dignified simplicity. Despite the differences of character that come through, the penetrating eyes connect them all. Surrounded by these pictures, you feel that you are being looked at by these artists as much as you are looking at them.

Although in the past decade Seidner has made his reputation in the Paris fashion world, his roots are in the other arts, and his capacity to traverse and understand them helps explain what he has done here. When asked about the artists he has portrayed, Seidner said simply, "These are some of the best minds of our time." And his real accomplishment is that he makes the viewer understand this. In a way, this exhibition is like a roomful of Wanted posters, with the men and women here sought not for their crimes but for their gifts.

"Photographs from the 19th Century"—A good mix of works by some of the big names of the period, such as Félix Teynard, Julia Margaret Cameron, Carleton Watkins, and Adam Clark Vroman, and by photographers who have not yet been canonized. Through Jan. 23. (Danziger, 415 West Broadway.)

Short List—bernd and hilla becher, Sonnabend, 420 West Broadway (through Jan. 30); **josef breitenbach,** Houk Friedman, 1094 Madison Ave., at 82nd St., and Hirschl & Adler Modern, 420 West Broadway (both through Feb. 27); **craigie horsfield,** Gladstone, 99 Greene St. (through Feb. 6); **max kozloff,** P.P.O.W, 532 Broadway (through Feb. 6); **gustave le gray** and **robert adams,** Lowinsky, 575 Broadway (through Jan. 30); **toshio shibata,** Laurence Miller, 138 Spring St. (through Feb. 12); **michael a. smith,** Bace, 2 Bond St. (through Feb. 13); **maud sulter,** Steinbaum Krauss, 132 Greene St. (through Feb. 13).

MUSIC

The Masurati

Even though Kurt Masur has begun to make his humanizing mark on the New York Philharmonic, the orchestra's concerts are not therefore automatically to be recommended. This week's, however, recommend themselves. Tchaikovsky, whose popular Fourth Symphony is on the bill, is the composer in whose work Mr. Masur has most often seemed an inspired performer. Peter Serkin, the soloist, is one of the very few truly interesting mid-career pianists who take an active and convincing interest in Bach (whose D-Minor Concerto is also programmed). Stravinsky's lively concerto is a bonus. One presumes that "lively" will also describe David Stock's short opening piece, "Kickoff," even as one winces at the title. Perhaps it was to be expected that when the Philharmonic embarked on a commissioning program dedicated specifically to program-openers, it ran the risk of getting pieces whose names said it all and left the music simply to fill in expectations with greater or lesser effectiveness.

(The box-office number for the Metropolitan Opera House is 362-6000; for Alice Tully Hall, 875-5050; for Avery Fisher Hall, 875-5030; and for Carnegie Hall, 247-7800.)

OPERA

Metropolitan Opera—la bohème, with Leona Mitchell, Diana Soviero, Franco Farina, and Christopher Robertson; conducted by John Fiore. (Jan. 20 at 8.)... With Maria Spacagna as Mimì. (Jan. 23 at 8:30.)... **un ballo in maschera,** with Sharon Sweet, Harolyn Blackwell, Ludmila Schemtchuk, Taro Ichihara, and Juan Pons; John Fiore. (Jan. 21 at 8.)... **die zauberflöte,** with Dawn Upshaw, Sally Wolf, Frank Lopardo, Gottfried Hornik, and Eric Halfvarson; Donald Runnicles. (Jan. 22 at 8.)... **die meistersinger,** in a new production, with Karita Mattila, Francisco Araiza, Lars Magnusson, Donald McIntyre, Hermann Prey, and Jan-Hendrik Rootering; James Levine. (Jan. 23 at noon.)... With Karita Mattila, Francisco Araiza, Lars Magnusson, Bernd Weikl, Hermann Prey, and Jan-Hendrik Rootering; James Levine. (Jan. 26 at 6.)... **il trovatore,** with Aprile Millo, Dolora Zajick, Lando Bartolini, and Vladimir Chernov; Nello Santi. (Jan. 25 at 8.) (Metropolitan Opera House.)

New York City Opera National Company—The touring arm of the company that resides at Lincoln Center, presenting "Carmen." (Walt Whitman Hall, Brooklyn College, Flatbush and Nostrand Aves., Brooklyn. 1-718 951-4500. Jan. 23 at 8.)

ORCHESTRAS AND CHORUSES

New York Philharmonic—Kurt Masur conducts the première of David Stock's "Kickoff," Tchaikovsky's Symphony No. 4, and two piano concertos featuring Peter Serkin: the Bach D-Minor and Stravinsky's Concerto for Piano and Winds. (Avery Fisher Hall. Jan. 21 at 8, Jan. 22 at 11 a.m., and Jan. 26 at 7:30.)

Orchestra of St. Luke's—Roger Norrington conducts Prokofiev's First Symphony (the "Classical") and Brahms' Serenade No. 2, as well as flute concertos by Carl Stamitz (in G Major, Op. 29) and Penderecki (in its American première), both featuring Jean-Pierre Rampal. (Avery Fisher Hall. Jan. 20 at 8.)

Russian National Orchestra—At Carnegie Hall, Mikhail Pletnev conducting. Jan. 21 at 8: Tchaikovsky's "Francesca da Rimini," Scriabin's "Poème de l'Extase," and Brahms' Symphony No. 3.... ¶ Jan. 22 at 8: Beethoven's "Egmont" Overture, as well as Tchaikovsky's Piano Concerto No. 1 (with Ivo Pogorelich) and Suite No. 3.

Juilliard Orchestra—JoAnn Falletta conducts Strauss's "Till Eulenspiegel" and "Rosenkavalier" Waltzes, Milhaud's Cello Concerto No. 1 (with Thomas Wiebe), and Ravel's "La Valse." (Alice Tully Hall. Jan. 22 at 8. For information about free tickets, which are required, call 769-7406.)

Cleveland Orchestra—Christoph von Dohnányi conducts Ives' "Three Pieces in New England," Shulamit Ran's "Concert Piece for Piano and Orchestra" (featuring Alan Feinberg), and Dvořák's Symphony No. 7. (Carnegie Hall. Jan. 23 at 8.)

New York Chamber Symphony—Claudio Scimone conducts works by Vivaldi, Albinoni, and Boccherini, as well as an orchestral suite attributed to Bach. (92nd Street Y, Lexington Ave. at 92nd St. 415-5440. Jan. 23 at 8.)

American Composers Orchestra—Dennis Russell Davies conducts works by Leon Kirchner, Ge Gan-ru, Curtis Curtis-Smith (his Concerto for Piano Left-Hand and Orchestra, featuring Leon Fleisher), and the Canadian Indonesiophile Colin McPhee (his "Tabuh-Tabuhan"). (Carnegie Hall. Jan. 24 at 3.)

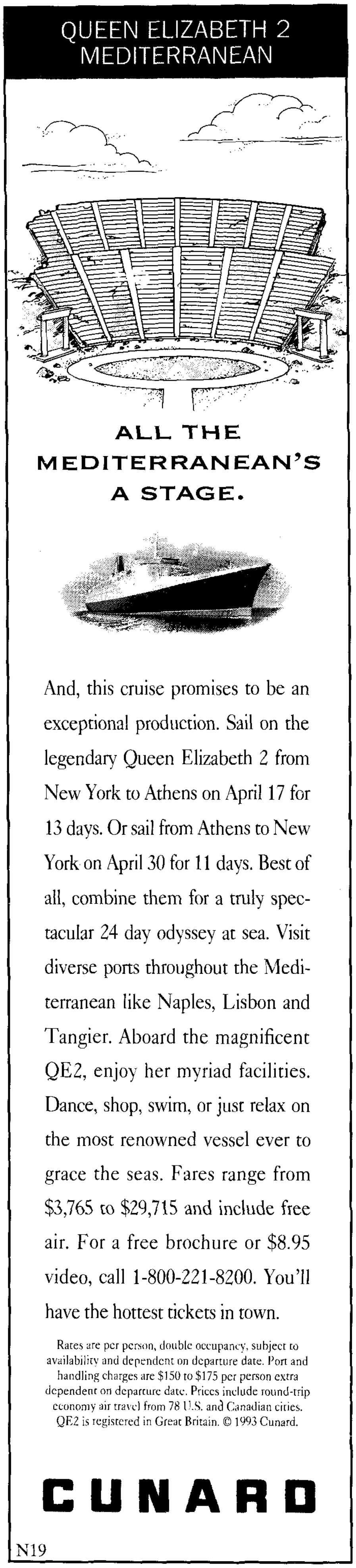
Princeton Singers—John Bertalot directs works by Josquin Desprez, Palestrina, Byrd, Brahms, and Herbert Howells. (St. Paul's Chapel, Broadway at Fulton St. 602-0873. Jan. 24 at 4.)

RECITALS

Robert White—The tenor continues a season-long retrospective survey of his variegated career, performing German Lieder, French mélodies, and American art songs, with pianist Samuel Sanders. The evening will also include the première of "Passing By," a ballet based on Irish and English folk songs and ballads, choreographed by Damian Woetzel and danced by seven students from the School of American Ballet. (Alice Tully Hall. Jan. 20 at 8.)

Bargemusic—Sonatas by Debussy (for violin and piano, in G Minor) and Ravel (for violin and cello), plus Schumann's D-Minor Piano Trio; with violinist Rolf Schulte, cellist Fred Sherry, and pianist Anne-Marie McDermott. (Fulton Ferry Landing, Brooklyn. 1-718 624-4061. Jan. 21 at 7:30 and Jan. 24 at 4.)

Soirée Baroque—If "Tous les Matins du Monde" left you hungry for more (and either it did or it didn't: there's no middle ground), you can gorge yourself on a feast of French Baroque chamber works presented by James Richman and members of the Concert Royal ensemble. The program will include selections from Marin Marais's viola da gamba works (played by Mary Springfels) and Couperin's first "Leçon de Ténèbres" (featuring soprano Christine Brandes), as well



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N19

MUSIC—Cont'd

as works by Jean-Marie Leclair, Michel Pignolet de Montéclair, and Louis Nicolas Clérambault. (Florence Gould Hall, 55 E. 59th St. 355-6160. Jan. 22 at 8.)

Jaime Laredo and Stephanie Brown—The violinist and the pianist perform an all-Schubert concert. (Metropolitan Museum, Fifth Ave. at 83rd St. 570-3949. Jan. 22 at 8.)

Shanghai String Quartet—Performing Grieg's G-Minor Quartet and Brahms' A-Major Piano Quartet (with the assistance of Ruth Laredo, who will offer a commentary). (Metropolitan Museum, Fifth Ave. at 83rd St. 570-3949. Jan. 23 at 7.)

Moscow String Quartet—Playing quartets by Mozart (K. 575), Schnittke (his Second), and Tchaikovsky (his Second). (Washington Irving High School, Irving Pl. at 16th St. Jan. 23 at 8. For information about tickets, call 586-4680.)

Warsaw Wind Quintet—Performing Mozart's Quintet in E-Flat (K. 452) and sextets by Ludwig Thuille, Marta Ptaszynska, and Alexandre Tansman (his "Danse de la Sorcière"); with pianist Michiko Otaki. (Kosciuszko Foundation, 15 E. 65th St. 734-2130. Jan. 24 at 2:45.)

Cleveland String Quartet—Performing quartets by Schubert (in A Minor, D. 804) and Dvořák (in A-Flat, Op. 105), as well as the New York première of Libby Larsen's "Schoenberg, Schenker and Schillinger." (Alice Tully Hall. Jan. 24 at 3.)

Wolfgang Holzmair—Baritone, in his New York début recital, performing songs by Schubert, Wolf, Mendelssohn, and Mahler; with pianist Markus Hinterhäuser. (The Frick Collection, 1 E. 70th St. 288-0700. Jan. 24 at 5.)

Flute and Harp Duos—The New York Flute Club, which is sponsoring the event, calls it a "Flute and Harp Spectacular," but that sounds rather overwhelming for a succession of such subtle ensembles. Four well-established flute-and-harp duos will be featured: the Glorian Duo (playing works by Jean-Louis Tulou and David Diamond), Marya Martin/Nancy Allen (offering Spohr and Fauré), Sue Ann Kahn/Susan Jolles (performing Mozart and Jean Françaix), and Linda Chesis/Sara Cutler (intoning Saint-Saëns and David Noon). (CAMI Hall, 165 W. 57th St. Jan. 24 at 5:30. Tickets at the door on the day of the concert.)

Samuel Bartos and the Essex String Quartet—The foursome performs Beethoven's F-Major Quartet (Op. 18, No. 1) and Mr. Bartos joins three of them for Brahms' A-Major Piano Quartet. (Hotel Wales, Madison Ave. at 92nd St. Jan. 24 at 6. No tickets necessary.)

Leonidas Kavakos—Violinist, playing sonatas by Mozart (K. 526), Beethoven (Op. 96), and Ravel (his early Sonate, written in 1897 but not published until after his death), as well as Bartók's First Rhapsody and Sarasate's "Zigeunerweisen"; with pianist Peter Nagy. (Walter Reade Theatre, 165 W. 65th St., plaza level. Jan. 25 at 7:30. For information about tickets, call 875-5050.)

Juilliard Focus! 1993—In this year's edition of Juilliard's annual modern-music festival, a group of the conservatory's performers explore works by European composers of the "post-Boulez, Stockhausen, and Nono generation." Jan. 25 at 8: Composers from the United Kingdom (John Tavener, Judith Weir, Andrew Toovey, David Sawer, Giles Swayne, and Richard Barrett), Ireland (Gerald Barry), and Iceland (Hjálmor Ragnarsson). . . . ¶ Jan. 26 at 8: Music from Germany (by Adriana Hölszky, Heinz Winbeck, and Walter Zimmermann), Austria (Klaus Ager, Herbert Grassl, and HK Gruber), and Switzerland (Balz Trümpy). (Juilliard Theatre, 155 W. 65th St. For information about free tickets, which are required, call 769-7406. Through Jan. 30.)

Chelsea Chamber Ensemble—Presenting Mozart's "Kegelstatt" Trio, Schumann's Piano Quartet, and the première of a work by Nicholas Skedgell. (Weill Recital Hall, at Carnegie Hall. Jan. 25 at 8.)

Jon Gillock—The organist's program includes Mendelssohn's A-Major Sonata, fugues by Bach and Brahms (a rarely-performed, despairing work by the latter, in A-Flat Minor), works by Franck and Vierne, and an excerpt from Messiaen's "La Nativité du Seigneur." A benefit concert. (Church of the Incarnation, Madison Ave. at 35th St. For information about tickets, call 689-6350.)

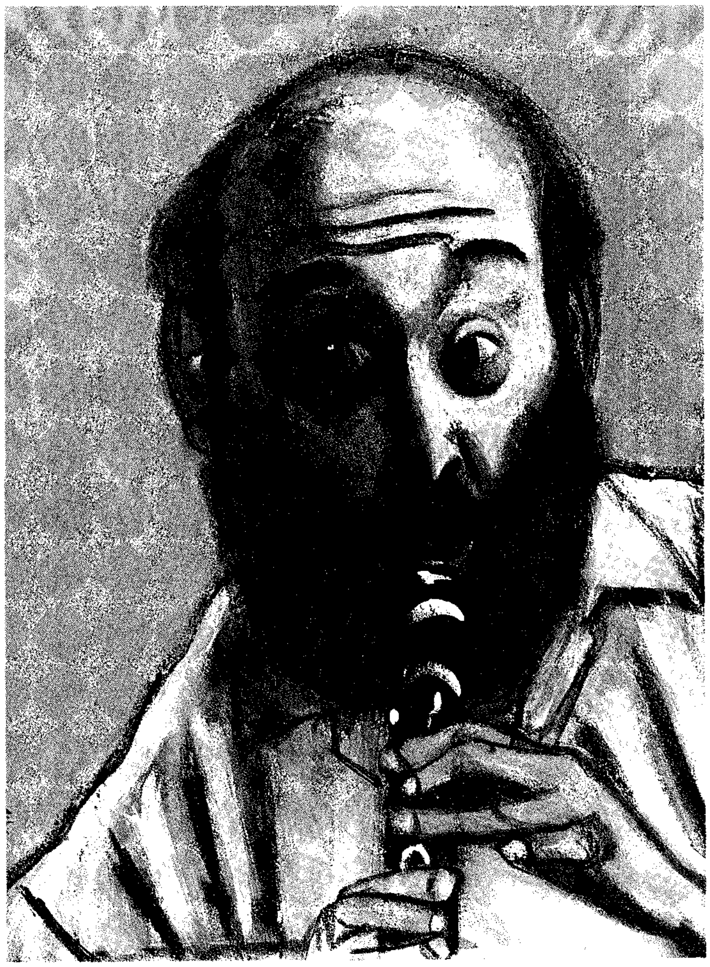
New Music Consort—Music by Carter, Babbitt, Ralph Shapey, Tan Dun, and Mark Mantel. (Borden Auditorium, Manhattan School of Music, Broadway at 122nd St. Jan. 26 at 8. For information about tickets, call 362-0962. . . . **note:** The concert will be preceded at 7 by a dialogue between the audience and all of the composers except Mr. Shapey.)

Festival Chamber Music Society—Presenting Beethoven's Septet (Op. 20); Françaix's Divertissement for bassoon, string quartet, and double bass; and Schumann's Piano Quintet. (Merkin Concert Hall, 129 W. 67th St. 362-8719. Jan. 26 at 8.)

JAZZ/POP/ROCK
PERSONAL APPEARANCES

Ned's Atomic Dustbin—Rat the guitarist, Dan Dan the drummer, Mat and Alex (both on bass), and Jonn the singer lifted their group's name from an old "Goon Show" episode—they come out of the Midlands scene in the outskirts of Birmingham, England—but their sound, which is all thrashing guitar fuzz, thundering rhythm attack, and churning vehemence, is far from whimsical. Their 1991 album, "God Fodder," was full of thrilling noise and rallying-cry songs like "Kill Your Television." The band's latest release, "Are You Normal?" is similarly speed-crazed and witty. Live, they are scorching. (Roseland, 239 W. 52nd St. 307-7171. Jan. 22 at 8.)

Andy Statman Klezmer Orchestra—Old-time Odessa, resounding with the sounds of the professional musicians known as *klezmorim*, gained a reputation as the New Orleans of the Russian Empire. Their infectious rhythms and heart-on-the-sleeve poignancy travelled well to the New World, where they became entwined with the music of the jazz age. In the early seventies, a handful of latter-day enthusiasts swooped in to revive the almost vanished tradition. Among them was Andy Statman, a clarinettist (and also the first jazz mandolinist in recent memory), whose "nouvelle klezmer" renditions update the classic style of his predecessors with overtones of modern jazz and blues. (Merkin Concert Hall, 129 W. 67th St. 362-8719. Jan. 23 at 8.)



Andy Statman at Merkin Concert Hall

ANDREA VENTURA

SPORTS

HOME TEAMS

Knicks—Vs. the Charlotte Hornets, Jan. 20. . . . ¶ Vs. the Philadelphia 76ers, Jan 26. (Game time, 7:30.)

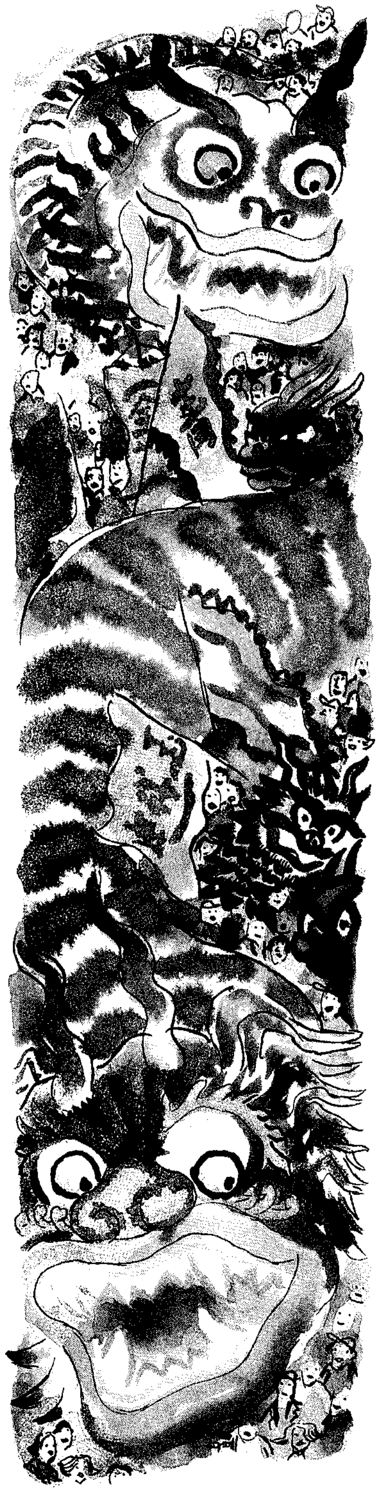
Nets—Vs. the Chicago Bulls, Jan. 21 at 7:30. . . . ¶ Vs. the Houston Rockets, Jan. 24 at 7. . . . ¶ Vs. the Los Angeles Lakers, Jan. 26 at 7:30.

Rangers—Away until Jan. 27, when they face the Winnipeg Jets.

Islanders—Vs. the Philadelphia Flyers, Jan. 23. . . . ¶ Vs. the Devils, Jan. 26. (Game time, 7:35.)

Devils—Vs. the Montreal Canadiens, Jan. 22 at 7:35.

(The Knicks and the Rangers play at Madison Square Garden, 465-6000; the Islanders at the Nassau Coliseum, 1-516 794-9300; and the Nets and the Devils at the Meadowlands Arena, 1-201 935-3900.)



Chinese New Year

GERARD NICOLAS

ABOVE AND BEYOND

Something to Crow About—The Year of the Rooster will begin on Jan. 23, 4691, according to the Chinese calendar. There will be lion and dragon dancing throughout Chinatown that day. Beginning Jan. 24, there will be performances of Mandarin and Cantonese operas at the Chinese Community Center Auditorium, 62 Mott St. (daily, at 2, for the next three weeks). Performances are free after Jan. 26.

Who's Got Short Shorts?—The Selected Shorts series, in which actors read both classic and new short stories, returns for its ninth season. On opening night, Marian Seldes will read Shirley Jackson's "The Lottery," which has provoked endless moral discussions in seventh-grade English classes for almost fifty years now. Fritz Weaver and Laura Esterman will also read. (Symphony Space, Broadway at 95th St. Jan. 20 at 6:30. Tickets at the door on the night of the reading.)

What's Old?—Antiquing—a surefire remedy for cabin fever. And for those who don't like to window shop in the cold, here are a few big shows to choose from. Tickets are available at the door. The Double Pier Antiques Show is two for the price of one. (Pier 90, Twelfth Ave. at 50th St. Jan. 23-24, from 10 to 5. . . .Pier 92, Twelfth Ave. at 52nd St. Jan. 23-24, from 11 to 6.). . . ¶ The Winter Antiques Show will feature an exhibit of collections from New York City's historic houses. (7th Regiment Armory, Park Ave. at 66th St. Jan. 23 and Jan. 25-26, from 11 to 9, and Jan. 24, from noon to 6. Through Jan. 31.). . . ¶ The third annual Sacred Heart Antiques Show will include art and antiques spanning twenty-five hundred years. (Convent of the Sacred Heart School, 1 E. 91st St. Jan. 22, from 6 to 9; Jan. 23, from 11 to 7; and Jan. 24, from 11 to 6.)

Readings—Jan. 20 at 7: Lynn Emanuel will read from her 1992 volume "The Dig" and will introduce Beckian Fritz Goldberg and Stephanie Strickland. (Poetry Society of America, 15 Gramercy Park S. Tickets at the door on the night of the reading.). . . ¶ Jan. 20 at 9: Vincent Katz, Jonathan Ames, and Rudy Burckhardt will present an evening of poetry, storytelling, and movies. (Fez, at Time Café, 380 Lafayette St. Tickets at the door on the night of the program.). . . ¶ Jan. 21 at 8: Novelists Jennifer Levin and Ron Carlson will read from their own work. (Dixon Place, 258 Bowery, near Houston St. Tickets at the door on the night of the reading.). . . ¶ Jan. 21 at 8 and 11: Allen Ginsberg and Jim Carroll will read from their own work. (Bottom Line, 15 W. 4th St., at Mercer St. 228-6300.). . . ¶ Jan. 25 at 8: "The Vietnam War: Literature and Experience," with David Rabe, Frances FitzGerald, Larry Heinemann, Stephen Wright, and Wallace Terry. (92nd Street Y, Lexington Ave. at 92nd St. 415-5440.). . . ¶ Jan. 26 at 7:30: Paul Watkins will read from his forthcoming novel, "The Promise of Light." (Books & Co., 939 Madison Ave., at 74th St. No tickets necessary.)

Talks—Jan. 20 at 6: James Gleick, author of "Genius: The Life and Science of Richard Feynman" and a former science correspondent for the *Times,* will discuss the process of writing a biography. (Mid-Manhattan Library, 455 Fifth Ave., at 40th St. No tickets necessary.). . . ¶ Jan. 21 at 8: Richard Serra will converse with art historian Nan Rosenthal about his sculptures. There will also be a slide presentation. (92nd Street Y, Lexington Ave. at 92nd St. 415-5440.). . . ¶ Jan. 24 at 7:30: Mark Shields will talk with Charlie Rose about the recent Presidential campaign. (92nd Street Y, Lexington Ave. at 92nd St. 415-5440.). . . ¶ Jan. 25 at 6:30: "Selecting the Music: How a Concert Is Created," with Kurt Masur, Howard Shanet, and Carlos Moseley. (Bruno Walter Auditorium, New York Public Library for the Performing Arts, Lincoln Center. No tickets necessary.). . . ¶ Jan. 26 at 6: Poet and New Directions founder and publisher James Laughlin will be interviewed by Eliot Weinberger. (New York Public Library, Fifth Ave. at 42nd St. 930-0571.)

Walks—Jan. 23 at 11: A tour of artists' studios and galleries in Tribeca, sponsored by Eye on Art Tours. For more information, call 877-5117. . . . ¶ Jan. 23 at noon: "From Emerald Isle to Ellis Island," the Irish immigration experience, sponsored by Big Onion Walking Tours. For more information, call 439-1090. . . . ¶ Jan. 24 at 2: A stroll through Central Park, visiting film locations, sponsored by the Urban Park Rangers. Meets at Bethesda Terrace, which is mid-Park on the 72nd St. transverse, above the Bethesda fountain. No tickets necessary.

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CUNARD

N11

GOINGS ON ABOUT TOWN

THE MOVIE HOUSES

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
			20	21	22	23
24	25	26				

FILMS ACCOMPANIED BY A DAGGER ARE DESCRIBED IN "MOVIES IN BRIEF," STARTING ON PAGE 26.

EAST SIDE

Angelika Film Center, 18 W. Houston St. (995-2000)

Theatre 1: "Enchanted April" (directed by Mike Newell).

Theatre 2: "The Crying Game" (†).

Theatre 3: "Peter's Friends" (Kenneth Branagh), with Branagh, Emma Thompson, Rita Rudner, Stephen Fry, and Hugh Laurie.

Theatre 4: "A Captive in the Land" (John Berry), with Sam Waterston.

Theatre 5: "The Crying Game" (†).

Theatre 6: "Bad Lieutenant" (Abel Ferrara), with Harvey Keitel.

Little Theatre, Public Theatre, 425 Lafayette St. (598-7171)

Through Jan. 21: (Separate admissions) "Il Portaborse" (1991, Daniele Luchetti; in Italian); and "Night and Day" (Chantal Akerman, in French).

From Jan. 22: "In Advance of the Landing" (Dan Curtis).

Movieland 8th Street Triplex, 36 E. 8th. (477-6600)

Theatre 1: "Chaplin" (†).

Theatre 2: "The Bodyguard" (†).

Theatre 3: "Leap of Faith" (Richard Pearce), with Steve Martin.

Village Theatre VII, 3rd Ave. at 11th. (982-0400)

Theatre 1: "Bob Roberts" (†).

Theatre 2: "A Few Good Men" (†).

Theatre 3: "Malcolm X" (†).

Theatre 4: "A Few Good Men" (†).

Theatre 5: "Damage" (†).

Theatre 6: "Forever Young" (†).

Theatre 7: "Nowhere to Run" (Robert Harmon), with Jean-Claude Van Damme.

Village East Cinemas, 2nd Ave. at 12th. (529-6799)

Theatre 1: Through Jan. 21: "Used People" (Beeban Kidron), with Shirley MacLaine. From Jan. 22: "Hexed" (Alan Spencer), with Arye Gross.

Theatre 2: "Alive" (Frank Marshall), with Ethan Hawke and Vincent Spano.

Theatre 3: Through Jan. 21: "Leprechaun" (Mark Jones), with Warwick Davis. From Jan. 22: "Aspen Extreme" (Patrick Hasburgh), with Paul Gross and Peter Berg.

Theatre 4: "Aladdin" (†).

Theatre 5: "Howards End" (James Ivory).

Theatre 6: "The Player" (†).

Theatre 7: "Unforgiven" (†).

19th Street East 6, B'way at 19th. (260-8000)

Theatre 1: Through Jan. 21: "Leap of Faith" (Richard Pearce), with Steve Martin. From Jan. 22: "Hexed" (Alan Spencer), with Arye Gross and Claudia Christian.

Theatre 2: To be announced.

Theatre 3: "Alive" (Frank Marshall), with Ethan Hawke and Vincent Spano.

Theatre 4: "The Bodyguard" (†).

Theatre 5: "Chaplin" (†).

Theatre 6: "Aladdin" (†).

Gramercy, Lexington at 23rd. (475-1660)

"Flirting" (John Duigan).

Bay Cinema, 2nd Ave. at 32nd. (679-0160)

"Lorenzo's Oil" (†).

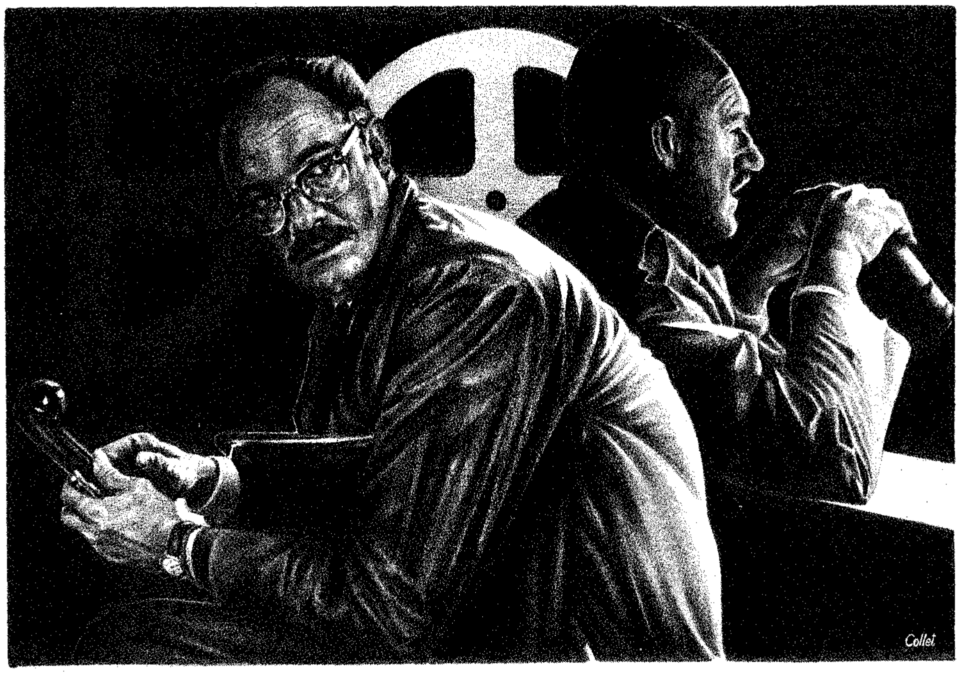
Murray Hill Cinemas, 160 E. 34th. (689-6548)

Theatre 1: "Alive" (Frank Marshall), with Ethan Hawke and Vincent Spano.

Theatre 2: "Body of Evidence" (†).

Theatre 3: "Aladdin" (†).

Theatre 4: Through Jan. 21: "Nowhere to Run" (Robert Harmon), with Jean-Claude Van Damme. From Jan. 22: "Aspen Extreme" (Patrick Hasburgh), with Paul Gross and Peter Berg.



At Theatre 80 St. Marks, Gene Hackman in "The Conversation"

34th Street Showplace, 238 E. 34th. (532-5544)

Theatre 1: "Malcolm X" (†).

Theatre 2: Through Jan. 21: "Leap of Faith" (Richard Pearce), with Steve Martin. From Jan. 22: "Hexed" (Alan Spencer), with Arye Gross and Claudia Christian.

Theatre 3: "Leprechaun" (Mark Jones), with Warwick Davis.

34th St. East, 241 E. 34th. (683-0255)

"A Few Good Men" (†).

Sutton I and 2, 3rd Ave. at 57th. (759-1411)

Theatre 1: Through Jan. 21: "The Crying Game" (†). From Jan. 22: "Aspen Extreme" (Patrick Hasburgh), with Paul Gross and Peter Berg.

Theatre 2: "The Crying Game" (†).

Gotham Cinema, 3rd Ave. at 58th. (759-2262)

"Hoffa" (†).

Plaza, 42 E. 58th. (355-3320)

"Reservoir Dogs" (Quentin Tarantino), with Harvey Keitel.

Manhattan Twin, 3rd Ave. at 59th. (935-6420)

Theatre 1: Through Jan. 21: "Trespass" (†). From Jan. 22: "Hexed" (Alan Spencer), with Arye Gross and Claudia Christian.

Theatre 2: "Leprechaun" (Mark Jones).

59th Street East Cinema, 239 E. 59th. (759-4630)

"Toys" (Barry Levinson), with Robin Williams.

Baronet and Coronet, 3rd Ave. at 59th. (355-1663)

Theatre 1: "Used People" (Beeban Kidron), with Shirley MacLaine.

Theatre 2: "Body of Evidence" (†).

Cinema I, Cinema II, and Cinema 3rd Avenue, 3rd Ave. at 60th. (753-6022)

Theatre 1: "Alive" (Frank Marshall), with Ethan Hawke and Vincent Spano.

Theatre 2: "Damage" (†).

Theatre 3: "Aladdin" (†).

First & 62nd Cinemas, 400 E. 62nd. (752-4600)

Theatre 1: "Home Alone 2: Lost in New York" (Chris Columbus), with Macaulay Culkin, Joe Pesci, and Daniel Stern.

Theatre 2: "Lorenzo's Oil" (†).

Theatre 3: "Lorenzo's Oil" (†).

Theatre 4: "Scent of a Woman" (†).

Theatre 5: "Lorenzo's Oil" (†).

Theatre 6: "Scent of a Woman" (†).

Gemini I and 2, 2nd Ave. at 64th. (832-1670)

Theatre 1: "Malcolm X" (†).

Theatre 2: "Chaplin" (†).

Beekman, 2nd Ave. at 66th. (737-2622)

"A Few Good Men" (†).

New York Twin, 2nd Ave. at 67th. (744-7339)

Theatre 1: "The Bodyguard" (†).

Theatre 2: "Nowhere to Run" (Robert Harmon), with Jean-Claude Van Damme.

68th St. Playhouse, 3rd Ave. at 68th. (734-0302)

"Passion Fish" (John Sayles), with Mary McDonnell and Alfre Woodard.

Tower East, 3rd Ave. at 71st. (879-1313)

"Forever Young" (†).

East 85th Street, 1st Ave. at 85th. (249-5100)

"Body of Evidence" (†).

Park & 86th Street Cinemas, 125 E. 86th. (534-1880)

Theatre 1: "Lorenzo's Oil" (†).

Theatre 2: "Scent of a Woman" (†).

Orpheum VII, 3rd Ave. at 86th. (876-2400)

Theatre 1: "Malcolm X" (†).

Theatre 2: "A Few Good Men" (†).

Theatre 3: "The Bodyguard" (†).

Theatre 4: "Hoffa" (†).

Theatre 5: "Alive" (Frank Marshall), with Ethan Hawke and Vincent Spano.

Theatre 6: "Forever Young" (†).

Theatre 7: Through Jan. 21: "Nowhere to Run" (Robert Harmon), with Jean-Claude Van Damme. From Jan. 22: "Hexed" (Alan Spencer), with Arye Gross and Claudia Christian.

86th Street East Twin, 3rd Ave. at 86th. (249-1144)

Theatre 1: Through Jan. 21: "Leprechaun" (Mark Jones), with Warwick Davis. From Jan. 22: "Aspen Extreme" (Patrick Hasburgh), with Paul Gross and Peter Berg.

Theatre 2: "Aladdin" (†).

WEST SIDE

Film Forum, 209 W. Houston St. (727-8110)

Theatre 1: "Money Man" (1992, directed by Philip Haas), a documentary.

Theatre 2: See listings under Revival Houses.

Theatre 3: Through Jan. 21: "Daddy and the Muscle Academy" (Ilppo Pohjola, in English and Finnish). From Jan. 22: "Malcolm X—The Documentary" (1972), a documentary.

Waverly I and 2, 6th Ave. at 3rd. (929-8037)

Theatre 1: "Hoffa" (†).

Theatre 2: "Lorenzo's Oil" (†).

Art Greenwich Twin, Greenwich Ave. at 12th. (929-3350)

Theatre 1: "Scent of a Woman" (†).

Theatre 2: "Body of Evidence" (†).

Quad Cinema, 34 W. 13th. (255-8800)

Theatre 1: "Tous les Matins du Monde" (Alain Corneau, in French).

Theatre 2: "Reservoir Dogs" (Quentin Tarantino), with Harvey Keitel.

Theatre 3: Through Jan. 21: "Intervista" (Federico Fellini; in Italian). From Jan. 22: "The Texas Chain Saw Massacre" (1974, Tobe Hooper), with Marilyn Burns.

Theatre 4: "The Match Factory Girl" (Aki Kaurismaki, in Finnish).

EDWARD COLLET

Chelsea Cinemas, 260 W. 23rd. (691-4744)
Theatre 1: "A Few Good Men" (†).
Theatre 2: "Scent of a Woman" (†).
Theatre 3: "Scent of a Woman" (†).
Theatre 4: "Body of Evidence" (†).
Theatre 5: "Hoffa" (†).
Theatre 6: "Lorenzo's Oil" (†).
Theatre 7: "Body of Evidence" (†).
Theatre 8: "Used People" (Beeban Kidron), with Shirley MacLaine.
Theatre 9: "Nowhere to Run" (Robert Harmon), with Jean-Claude Van Damme.

23rd St. West Triplex, 333 W. 23rd. (989-0060)
Theatre 1: "Leprechaun" (Mark Jones), with Warwick Davis.
Theatre 2: "Forever Young" (†).
Theatre 3: (Matinées only) "Home Alone 2: Lost in New York" (Chris Columbus), with Macaulay Culkin, Joe Pesci, and Daniel Stern; and (evenings only) "Malcolm X" (†).

Guild, 33 W. 50th. (757-2406)
"Aladdin" (†).

Worldwide Cinemas, 50th St. between 8th and 9th Aves. (246-1583)
Theatre 1: "A Few Good Men" (†).
Theatre 2: "The Player" (†).
Theatre 3: "Lorenzo's Oil" (†).
Theatre 4: "Enchanted April" (Mike Newell).
Theatre 5: "Glengarry Glen Ross" (James Foley), with Al Pacino and Jack Lemmon.
Theatre 6: "A River Runs Through It" (Robert Redford).

Ziegfeld, 141 W. 54th. (765-7600)
"Hoffa" (†).

Festival, 6 W. 57th. (307-7856)
"Malcolm X" (†).

57th St. Playhouse, 110 W. 57th. (581-7360)
"Damage" (†).

Carnegie Hall Cinemas, 7th Ave. between 56th and 57th. (265-2520)
Theatre 1: "Peter's Friends" (Kenneth Branagh), with Branagh, Emma Thompson, Rita Rudner, Stephen Fry, and Hugh Laurie.
Theatre 2: "Peter's Friends."

Fine Arts, 4 W. 58th. (980-5656)
"The Lover" (Jean-Jacques Annaud).

Cinema 3, 2 W. 59th. (752-5959)
"Howards End" (James Ivory).

Columbus Circle, B'way at 61st. (247-5070)
"Forever Young" (†).

62nd & Broadway, 62 W. 62nd. (265-7466)
"Used People" (Beeban Kidron), with Shirley MacLaine.

Lincoln Plaza Cinemas, B'way at 63rd. (757-2280)
Theatre 1: "Tous les Matins du Monde" (Alain Corneau, in French).
Theatre 2: "Indochine" (Régis Wargnier, in French), with Catherine Deneuve.
Theatre 3: "The Crying Game" (†).
Theatre 4: "The Crying Game" (†).
Theatre 5: "The Crying Game" (†).
Theatre 6: Through Jan. 21: "Indochine." From Jan. 22: "The Oak" (Lucian Pintilie).

Regency, B'way at 67th. (724-3700)
"Scent of a Woman" (†).

84th Street Sixplex, B'way at 84th. (877-3600)
Theatre 1: Through Jan. 21: "Alive" (Frank Marshall), with Ethan Hawke and Vincent Spano. From Jan. 22: "Aspen Extreme" (Patrick Hasburgh), with Paul Gross and Peter Berg.
Theatre 2: "Chaplin" (†).
Theatre 3: "Body of Evidence" (†).
Theatre 4: "The Bodyguard" (†).
Theatre 5: "Aladdin" (†).
Theatre 6: "A Few Good Men" (†).

Metro Cinema 1 and 2, B'way at 99th. (222-1200)
Theatre 1: "Lorenzo's Oil" (†).
Theatre 2: "Home Alone 2: Lost in New York" (Chris Columbus), with Macaulay Culkin, Joe Pesci, and Daniel Stern.

Olympia I and II, B'way at 107th. (865-8128)
Theatre 1: "Leprechaun" (Mark Jones).
Theatre 2: "Nowhere to Run" (Robert Harmon), with Jean-Claude Van Damme.

TIMES SQUARE AREA

Criterion Center, B'way at 44th. (354-0900)
Theatre 1: "Trespass" (†).
Theatre 2: "Body of Evidence" (†).
Theatre 3: "The Bodyguard" (†).
Theatre 4: "Home Alone 2: Lost in New York" (directed by Chris Columbus), with Macaulay Culkin, Joe Pesci, and Daniel Stern.
Theatre 5: "Body of Evidence" (†).
Theatre 6: "Leprechaun" (Mark Jones).
Theatre 7: "Home Alone 2: Lost in New York."

Embassy 1, B'way at 46th. (302-0494)
"Alive" (Frank Marshall), with Ethan Hawke and Vincent Spano.

Embassy 2, 3, and 4, 7th Ave. at 47th. (730-7262)
Theatre 1: Through Jan. 21: "The Distinguished Gentleman" (Jonathan Lynn), with Eddie Murphy. From Jan. 22: "Aspen Extreme" (Patrick Hasburgh), with Paul Gross and Peter Berg.
Theatre 2: "Bad Lieutenant" (Abel Ferrara), with Harvey Keitel.
Theatre 3: "Bram Stoker's Dracula" (Francis Ford Coppola), with Gary Oldman.

Astor Plaza, 44th St. at B'way. (869-8340)
"Nowhere to Run" (Robert Harmon), with Jean-Claude Van Damme.

National Twin, B'way at 44th. (869-0950)
Theatre 1: "Scent of a Woman" (†).
Theatre 2: Through Jan. 21: "A Few Good Men" (†). From Jan. 22: "Hexed" (Alan Spencer), with Arye Gross and Claudia Christian.

REVIVAL HOUSES

Film Forum 2, 209 W. Houston St. (727-8110)
Jan. 20: "Crime Without Passion" (1934, directed by Ben Hecht and Charles MacArthur), with Claude Rains; and "The Scoundrel" (1935, Hecht and MacArthur), with Noël Coward.
Jan. 21-22: "The Fan" (1949, Otto Preminger), with Madeleine Carroll, George Sanders, and Jeanne Crain; and "Champion" (1949, Mark Robson), with Kirk Douglas, Arthur Kennedy, and Marilyn Maxwell.
Jan. 23-24: "Holiday" (1938, George Cukor), with Katharine Hepburn and Cary Grant; and "Suzy" (†).
Jan. 25: "Manslaughter" (1922, Cecil B. De Mille; a silent film), with Leatrice Joy; and "Not So Dumb" (1930, King Vidor), with Marion Davies, Elliott Nugent, and Donald Ogden Stewart.
From Jan. 26: A program of short films with Robert Benchley; and "The Green Pastures" (1936, Marc Connelly and William Keighley), with Rex Ingram.

Theatre 80 St. Marks, 80 St. Marks Pl. (254-7400)
Jan. 20: "Luna" (1979, Bernardo Bertolucci), with Jill Clayburgh; and "The Conformist" (1970, Bertolucci; in Italian), with Jean-Louis Trintignant, Stefania Sandrelli, and Dominique Sanda.
Jan. 21: "The Conversation" (1974, Francis Ford Coppola), with Gene Hackman; and "The French Connection" (1971, William Friedkin), with Hackman, Fernando Rey, and Roy Scheider.
Jan. 22-23: "The Bicycle Thief" (1949, Vittorio De Sica; in Italian); and "Miracle in Milan" (1951, De Sica; in Italian).
Jan. 24: "A Night at the Opera" (1935, Sam Wood) and "A Day at the Races" (1937, Wood), both with the Marx Brothers.
Jan. 25: "Vampyr" (†); and "Day of Wrath" (1943, Carl Dreyer; in Danish).
Jan. 26: "Dr. No" (1963, Terence Young) and "Thunderball" (1965, Young), both with Sean Connery.

FILM LIBRARIES, ETC.

Museum of Modern Art, Roy and Niuta Titus Theatres, 11 W. 53rd St. (708-9480)—Jan. 21 at 2:30: "The Egyptian" (1954, directed by Michael Curtiz), with Edmund Purdom. . . . ¶ Jan. 21 at 3 and 6: "Fit: Episodes in the History of the Body" (1991, Laurie Block), a documentary. . . . ¶ Jan. 21 at 6: "The Proud Rebel" (1958, Curtiz), with Alan Ladd. . . . ¶ Jan. 22 at 2:30 and Jan. 23 at 5: "King Creole" (1958, Curtiz), with Elvis Presley. . . . ¶ Jan. 22 at 3 and Jan. 23 at 5: "The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari" (1919, Robert Wiene; a German silent film), with Werner Krauss. . . . ¶ Jan. 22 at 6 and Jan. 23 at 2: "We're No Angels" (1955, Curtiz), with Humphrey

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MOVIE HOUSES—Cont'd

Bogart, Aldo Ray, Peter Ustinov, Joan Bennett, and Basil Rathbone. . . . ¶ Jan. 22 at 6 and Jan. 24 at 5: "The Beloved Rogue" (1927, Alan Crosland), with John Barrymore. . . . ¶ Jan. 23-24 at 2:30: "The Thief of Bagdad" (1940), with Sabu, Conrad Veidt, June Duprez, and Rex Ingram. . . . ¶ Jan. 24 at 2: "Black Orpheus" (1959, Marcel Camus; a Brazilian film, in Portuguese). . . . ¶ Jan. 24 at 5: "The Red Shoes" (†). . . . ¶ Jan. 25 at 2:30: "Yojimbo" (1961, Akira Kurosawa; in Japanese), with Toshiro Mifune. . . . ¶ Jan. 25 at 6: "Richard III" (1956, Laurence Olivier), with Olivier and Claire Bloom. . . . ¶ Jan. 25 at 6:30: "Bullets for Breakfast" (1992, Holly Fisher). Miss Fisher will be present. . . . ¶ Jan. 26 at 2:30: "Summertime" (see below). . . . ¶ Jan. 26 at 3 and 6: "Casablanca" (1942, Curtiz), with Bogart, Ingrid Bergman, Claude Rains, and Paul Henreid. . . . ¶ Jan. 26 at 6: "The Seventh Seal" (1956, Ingmar Bergman; in Swedish), with Max von Sydow.

Walter Reade Theatre, Lincoln Center, 165 W. 65th St., plaza level. (875-5600)—Jan. 20 at 2: "Father and His Three Sons—The Bartos Family" (1988, Péter Forgács). . . . ¶ Jan. 20 at 3:30: "Stavisky" (1974, Alain Resnais; in French), with Jean-Paul Belmondo and Charles Boyer. . . . ¶ Jan. 20 at 6: "Grand Concert of the People" (1991, Samen Aronovich; in Russian). . . . ¶ Jan. 20 at 9:15 and Jan. 21 at 2: "One-Way Street" (1991, John Hughes). . . . ¶ Jan. 21 at 3:30 and Jan. 24 at 4: "Crystal Nights" (1992, Tonia Marketaki). . . . ¶ Jan. 21 at 6:15 and Jan. 23 at 7:45: "Charlotte: Life or Theater?" (1992, Richard Dindo). . . . ¶ Jan. 21 at 8:15, Jan. 23 at 6, and Jan. 24 at 9: "The Last Frontier" (1992, Manuel Cussó-Ferrer; in Spanish). . . . ¶ Jan. 22 at 2, 4, 6, 7:45, and 9:30: A program of films by the Brothers Quay. . . . ¶ Jan. 23-24 at 2: "Samson & Sally" (1984, Jannik Hastrup). . . . ¶ Jan. 23 at 4: "Otto Is a Rhino" (1982, Rumle Hammerich). . . . ¶ Jan. 23 at 9:15: "Labyrinth" (1992, Jaromil Jires; in German). . . . ¶ Jan. 24 at 7 and Jan. 26 at 2, 4, and 6: "Get Thee Out" (1991, Dmitry Astrakhan; in Russian).

Museum of Television and Radio, 25 W. 52nd St. (621-6800)—Through Jan. 24: "Wings" (1983, John Madden), with Constance Cummings. . . . From Jan. 26: "The Trial of Bernhard Goetz" (1988, Harry Moses), with Michael P. Boatman and Peter Crombie. (Showings Tuesdays through Sundays at 2.) . . . ¶ Jan. 21 at 6 and Jan. 22 at 6:30: "Lemon Sky" (1988, Jan Egelson), with Kevin Bacon.

Japan Society, 333 E. 47th St. (752-0824)—Jan. 22 at 6:30: "Okoto and Sasuke" (1935, Yasujiro Shimazu; in Japanese), with Kinuyo Tanaka; and "The Yearning Laurel" (1938, Hiromasa Nomura; in Japanese), with Ken Uehara and Tanaka.

Florence Gould Hall, 55 E. 59th St. (355-6160)—Jan. 20 at 12:30, 3:15, 6, and 8:45: "The Game of Love" (†).

American Museum of the Moving Image, 35th Ave. at 36th St., Astoria. (1-718 784-0077)—"Changing the Picture: The Emergence of African Americans in Television." Jan. 23 at 2: "Sophisticated Gents" (1981, Harry Falk), with Bernie Casey, Rosey Grier, Robert Hooks, Ron O'Neal, and Melvin Van Peebles. Mr. Van Peebles will be present. . . . ¶ Jan. 24 at 4:30: "Pioneer of Color: A Conversation with Mal Goode" (1992), a documentary.

MOVIES IN BRIEF

SEE PRECEDING PAGES FOR THEATRE ADDRESSES AND TELEPHONE NUMBERS. IF A MOVIE HAS BEEN REVIEWED IN "THE CURRENT CINEMA" DURING THE PAST TWO YEARS, THE DATE OF ITS REVIEW IS GIVEN.

News from the Rialto

After critics flayed him for the swoony lyricism of "Ryan's Daughter," David Lean said he could have justified that film's picture-postcard love imagery by having a priest tell the heroine that she was "seeing the world through rose-colored glasses." And why not? A similar strategy had worked niftily for him before, in the elegant 1955 soap opera, "Summertime" (playing January 26, at the Museum of Modern Art). In the opening scene, he depicts a single, fortyish Midwestern woman, Jane Hudson (Katharine Hepburn), who is unable to contain her excitement as her train enters Venice. She's been poring through a booklet entitled "Venice—City of Romance," and Venice, City of Romance, is just what Lean gives her: gondolas and cerulean vistas and salmon-sunned twilights; an antique store out of Henry James; plazas, canals, and alleyways filled with mystery and erotic promise; and a dazzling fireworks display to salute her first night of love.

As Hudson nurses her vague hopes that something marvellous will happen, and eventually melts into a brief liaison with a handsome shopkeeper (Rossano Brazzi), Lean collaborates graciously and sensitively with Hepburn. He taps her natural force, but he also focusses and shapes it. There's a ruminative beauty to the movie's portraiture. Decades after you see it, you remember Hepburn waiting at a café for her tardy lover, her glittering eyes darting about but ultimately looking inward, not betraying any consciousness of her own attractiveness.

(The following notes are by Pauline Kael, Terrence Rafferty, and Michael Sragow.)

Aladdin—Spiffy, inventive, and hilarious. The directors, John Musker and Ron Clements, who collaborated on the screenplay with Ted Elliott and Terry Rossio, streamline the traditional Aladdin story into a contest between the boy and a towering vizier-wizard named Jafar, Aladdin's rival for the hand of the Sultan's daughter, Princess Jasmine. What makes this wisecracking cartoon such intense, giddy fun is the eruption of uninhibited parody that Robin Williams provides as the voice of the Genie in Aladdin's lamp. The Genie mutates into dozens of variations on himself as Williams impersonates everyone from William F. Buckley, Jr., to Arsenio Hall. The animators' quick-draw craftsmanship keeps up with Williams' breakaway creativity. With the voices of Scott Weinger, Linda Larkin, Jonathan Freeman, and Gilbert Gottfried (who unexpectedly triumphs as Jafar's tough parrot, Iago); composer Alan Menken contributes five songs, with lyrics by Tim Rice and the late Howard Ashman.—M.S. (Reviewed in our issue of 11/30/92.) (Village East Cinemas, 19th Street East 6, Murray Hill Cinemas, Cinema 3rd Avenue, 86th Street East Twin, Guild, and 84th Street Sixplex.)

Bob Roberts—Tim Robbins is the writer, director, and star of this mock documentary that style, the senatorial campaign of a young radical-right demagogue. Bob Roberts is a folksinger: instead of giving speeches, he picks up an acoustic guitar and invites his audiences to sing along with his reactionary "protest" anthems. He's Pat Buchanan in Woody Guthrie's clothing, and what's scary about the movie is that this grotesque coupling doesn't even feel like a stretch. Robbins tosses off nasty satiric riffs at a reckless, headlong pace, and the movie, even at its most chilling, is hilarious; its humor is both precise enough to deflate its targets and goofy enough to feel liberating. And his performance as smiling Bob, although it's conceived as a caricature, is never tiresome: it's too finely detailed, and too gleeful. This terrifically entertaining movie represents something very unlikely and very welcome: liberal humor with sharp teeth.—T.R. (9/7/92) (Village Theatre VII.)

The Bodyguard—According to the screenwriter (and co-producer), Lawrence Kasdan, the script for this picture was written in 1975 as a possible vehicle for Steve McQueen. In lieu of McQueen, Kevin Costner plays the title character, a retired Secret Service man who is hired to protect a famous singer (played by Whitney Houston). Costner sports a fuzzy crewcut that's more travesty than homage, and he's very grim; he looks as if he were still troubled by inconsistencies in the Warren Commission report. Houston flings herself repeatedly at the taciturn hero, begging him for both sex and manly state-of-the-art security. It is, perhaps, a sign of progress that a big-budget commercial picture like this can feature a romance between a white man and a black woman without ever making the racial difference an issue. It would be a more encouraging sign if the movie were any good. Directed by Mick Jackson.—T.R. (12/14/92) (Movieland 8th Street Triplex, 19th Street East 6, New York Twin, Orpheum VII, 84th Street Sixplex, and Criterion Center.)

Body of Evidence—With Madonna, Willem Dafoe, Joe Mantegna, and Anne Archer; directed by Uli Edel. (Reviewed in this issue.) (Murray Hill Cinemas, Coronet, East 85th Street, Art Greenwich Twin, Chelsea Cinemas, 84th Street Sixplex, and Criterion Center.)

Chaplin—Aside from a few attempts to ape silent-slapstick style, the director of this sprawling bio-pic, Richard Attenborough, and the screenwriters (William Boyd, Bryan Forbes, and William Goldman, working from a story by Diana Hawkins), do their job like crammers. They overstuff nearly two and a half hours of running time with Chaplin's Dickensian London boyhood, his apprenticeship in vaudeville, his growing mastery of movie comedy, his frustrating love life, and the political consequences of his social conscience. Not surprisingly, simplification sets in early. Luckily, Robert Downey, Jr., as Chaplin, displays extraordinary physical and emotive talents. His deftness and agility make the loose re-creations of Chaplin's evolving style fun to watch; his suggestion of an unruly interior life is what keeps the movie (barely) alive. And Geraldine Chaplin manages the feat of playing her own mad grandmother, imbuing Hannah Chaplin with a wrenching combination of wounded maternalism and addled propriety. The supporting cast includes Dan Aykroyd (as Mack Sennett), Kevin Kline (as Douglas Fairbanks), Diane Lane (as Paulette Goddard), and Penelope Ann Miller (as Edna Purviance).—M.S. (12/28/92-1/4/93) (Movieland 8th Street Triplex, 19th Street East 6, Gemini, and 84th Street Sixplex.)

THE CRYING GAME—This amazing new movie by the Irish writer and director Neil Jordan ("Mona Lisa," "The Miracle") has the sure grip and the unstoppable momentum of a dream. Jordan tells the story of Fergus (Stephen Rea), a troubled I.R.A. gunman who undergoes a thorough emotional metamorphosis, and he makes the hero's change of heart moving and persuasive; the film inspires an irrational sort of trust, a willing suspension of something deeper and more fundamental than disbelief. The script is full of reversals and abrupt dislocations and, halfway through, the movie springs a huge, jaw-dropping surprise. Disorienting us isn't the ultimate aim of Jordan's artistic strategy, though; he jars us out of our accustomed responses to prepare us for the purer, more penetrating ones he really wants from us. The picture is a splendid entertainment—an elating, charmed sprint through all sorts of contemporary terrors. Also with Forest Whitaker, Miranda Richardson, Jim Broadbent, Adrian Dunbar, and a newcomer named Jaye Davidson, who is astonishing.—T.R. (11/16/92) (Angelika Film Center, Sutton, and Lincoln Plaza Cinemas.)

DAMAGE—With Jeremy Irons, Juliette Binoche, Miranda Richardson, and Rupert Graves; directed by Louis Malle. (Reviewed in this issue.) (Village Theatre VII, Cinema II, and 57th St. Playhouse.)

A FEW GOOD MEN—Tom Cruise and Jack Nicholson square off in this yuppie version of "The Caine Mutiny Court-Martial," with Cruise as a glib, Harvard-trained Navy lawyer defending two Marines accused of murder, and Nicholson as the Captain Queeg-like officer who set the crime in motion. The writer, Aaron Sorkin (who adapted his own hit play), and the director, Rob Reiner, seem to think the story has something to say about legal and military honor. They take issues that have been chewed over for centuries and finally succeed in reducing them to cud. The whole film, with its steady, important-picture pacing, its foursquare visual style, and its pseudo-profundity, is a piece of glorified banality. Nicholson boasts a couple of bravura scenes but Kevin Bacon gives the most persuasive performance, as the no-nonsense prosecutor. With Demi Moore, Kevin Pollak, Kiefer Sutherland, J. T. Walsh, and Wolfgang Bodison.—M.S. (12/14/92) (Village Theatre VII, 34th St. East, Beekman, Orpheum VII, Chelsea Cinemas, Worldwide Cinemas, and 84th Street Sixplex. . . . ¶ National Twin; through Jan. 21.)

FOREVER YOUNG—A retro romance in the insufferably gloppy manner of Steven Spielberg's "Always" (which had many of us hoping "Never"). Mel Gibson stars as a daredevil Air Corps pilot in 1939 who volunteers for a cryogenics experiment after his true love (Isabel Glasser) enters a seemingly irreversible coma. By a twist of fate, he stays frozen for over fifty years, emerging with enough of his Dudley Do-Right manliness intact to impress single mom Jamie Lee Curtis, her young son, Elijah Wood, and even her dull suitor, Nicholas Surovy. The screenwriter, Jeffrey Abrams, has a mind that channel-hops from AMC to Nick at Nite: he stuffs the film with old-movie gimmicks and sitcom devices, such as Gibson's being able to propose marriage only when his lover is absent. The director, Steve Miner, matches the writer drip for drip. Gibson isn't smarmy, exactly, but the film makes him appear that way; it's like the joke in "L.A. Story" picturing him as the man of everybody's dreams, male or female. With George Wendt and David Marshall Grant.—M.S. (Village Theatre VII, Tower East, Orpheum VII, 23rd St. West Triplex, and Columbus Circle.)

THE GAME OF LOVE (1954)—Claude Autant-Lara's film version of the Colette story treats the theme with beautiful simplicity. The sixteen-year-old boy (Pierre-Michel Beck), and the fifteen-year-old girl (Nicole Berger) are disturbed by the emotions and impulses developing in them; it isn't until the boy is initiated by an older woman (Edwige Feuillère) that the two adolescents get together—he passes on what he has learned. Feuillère conveys the painful and degrading position of the older woman with

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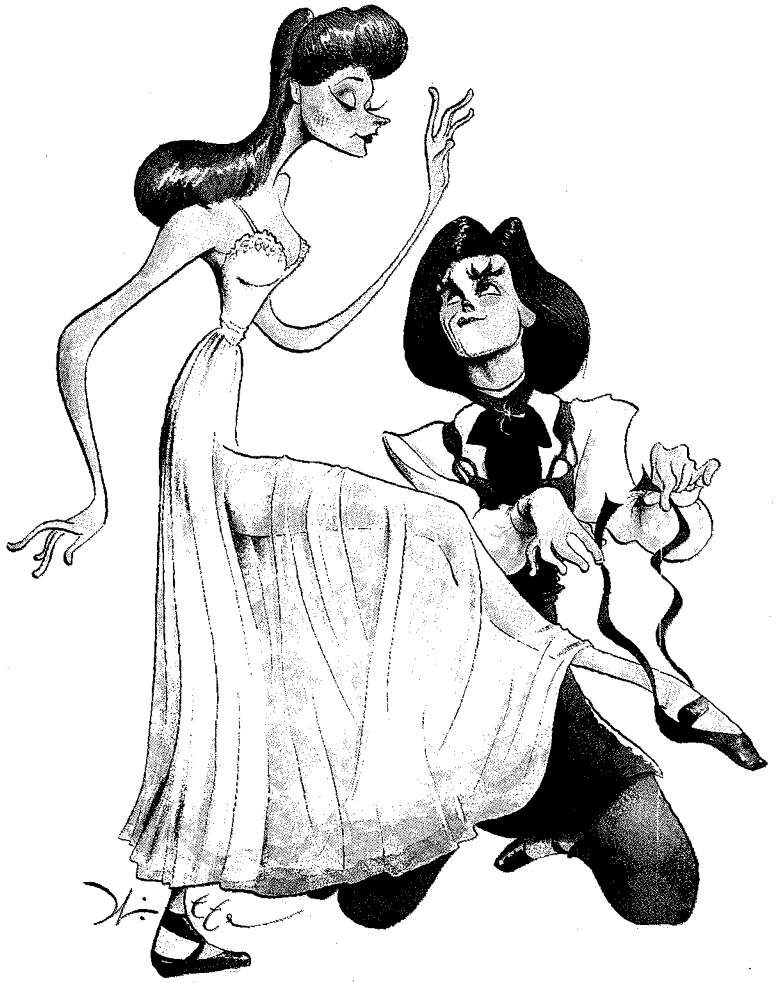
IN BRIEF–Cont'd

infinite tact (though not to the reviewer of one newspaper, who described her as a black widow spider searching for prey). In French.—P.K. (Florence Gould Hall; Jan. 20.)

Hoffa—The life of the flamboyant labor leader, who lay down with mobsters and got up with subpoenas, is a terrific subject for a movie—a story of corruption and power, like "Citizen Kane" and the "Godfather" pictures. But what director Danny DeVito and screenwriter David Mamet have done here couldn't have been predicted. They've made a two-hour-and-fifteen-minute movie that doesn't tell the story of Jimmy Hoffa; they've made his life inconsequential. Their Hoffa (Jack Nicholson) is just a blustery movie tough guy: he gives speeches whose content we aren't encouraged to think about; he pops up in the foreground of labor disputes that haven't been explained to us; he appears before investigative panels whose purposes are unclear, and is interrogated about crimes we've neither seen nor heard about. "Hoffa" tells us less about Hoffa than it does about Mamet's chronic nostalgia for the manly-man ethos of yesteryear—a romantic vision of America, where beefy, two-fisted giants once walked and thugs were thugs, not corporate weasels. Also with Armand Assante, J. T. Walsh, Robert Prosky, and DeVito.—T.R. (12/28/92-1/4/93) (Gotham Cinema, Orpheum VII, Waverly, Chelsea Cinemas, and Ziegfeld.)

Lorenzo's Oil—Susan Sarandon and Nick Nolte portray an extraordinary (real-life) couple named Michaela and Augusto Odone, whose five-year-old son, Lorenzo, is found to have an extremely rare, ruthlessly degenerative, incurable disease. Frustrated by the inadequancy of available therapies and outraged by the primitive state of knowledge about the disease, the Odones won't accept the inevitability of his fate until they've studied the disease thoroughly. It's easy to imagine the Odones' courage and tenacity processed by Hollywood into the sort of shrink-wrapped package of uplift that has, over the years, given the loftiest qualities of the human spirit a really bad name. But director George Miller, a former doctor best known for the punk-inflected "Mad Max" series of action movies, doesn't treat his characters reverently, and explains the data to us patiently, slowly, so we get caught up in the medical mystery. The result is an almost freak occurence: an inspirational drama that's genuinely inspiring. The honest emotion it produces out of what might have been banal tearjerker material is a small but real wonder. It gives human virtues a human scale. Also with Zack O'Malley Greenburg, Peter Ustinov, and Kathleen Wilhoite. Screenplay by Miller and Nick Enright.—T.R. (1/11/93) (Bay Cinema, First & 62nd Cinemas, Park & 86th Street Cinemas, Waverly, Chelsea Cinemas, Worldwide Cinemas, and Metro Cinema.)

Malcolm X—There's a great deal of passion in Spike Lee's three-hour-and-twenty-minute adaptation of "The Autobiography of Malcolm X," but it's not an artist's passion. Malcolm, who achieved fame in the early sixties as a compelling spokesman for the black-pride philosophy of the Nation of Islam, is an unlikely hero for a big-studio prestige picture: he begins as a predatory street criminal, becomes a studious Muslim ascetic, and fulfills himself as a scourge. The movie doesn't provide readers of the autobiography anything like a fresh vision of its remarkable subject. The ponderous rhythms of the great-man bio-pic only emphasize the impossibility of rendering this story with conventional movie-narrative means. Denzel Washington's performance as Malcolm gets off to a rocky start—for the first hour, he's required to play the hero as a teen-ager—but it gains



Moira Shearer and Léonide Massine in "The Red Shoes"

MICHAEL WITTE

authority as the movie goes along. This film's Malcolm isn't so much a character as an image: a statue for us to look up at in wonder. Also with Angela Bassett, Delroy Lindo, Albert Hall, Spike Lee, and Al Freeman, Jr. (a wonderfully sly turn as the hero's mentor, Elijah Muhammad). The script, credited to Lee and Arnold Perl, incorporates (haphazardly) scenes and ideas from a scenario written more than twenty years ago by James Baldwin.—T.R. (11/30/92) (Village Theatre VII, 34th Street Showplace, Gemini, Orpheum VII, and Festival. . . . ¶ 23rd St. West Triplex. Evenings only.)

The Player—The title character of Robert Altman's new movie is a young Hollywood studio executive named Griffin Mill (Tim Robbins), who, for no very good reason, murders an aspiring screenwriter. The picture is a brilliant dark comedy about the death of American filmmaking. It's like a documentary about a mirage: the world it shows us is sunlit and shimmering, and the people have the thin presence of holograms. Altman is doing one of his specialties here—exploring an odd American subculture—and when his idiosyncratic realism is applied to the insular, constantly self-regarding community of Hollywood "players" it has an almost hallucinatory effect. The movie has the exhilarating nonchalance of the director's seventies classics, and its tone is volatile, elusive: with breathtaking assurance, it veers from psychological-thriller suspense to goofball comedy to icy satire. Altman turns the self-reflective world of Hollywood into a fun house in which every grotesque distortion somehow appears to us as a newly discovered, paradoxical truth. Robbins gives a layered, richly suggestive performance—the sort of performance that Altman's style, at its best, produces without obvious effort. At sixty-seven, Altman still seems like the youngest filmmaker in America.—T.R. (4/20/92) (Village East Cinemas, and Worldwide Cinemas.)

The Red Shoes (1948)—The most "imaginative" and elaborate backstage musical ever filmed, and many have called it great. The film contains a fourteen-minute ballet, also called "The Red Shoes," based on a Hans Christian Andersen story about a wicked shoemaker who sells an enchanted pair of slippers to a young girl. Delighted at first with the slippers in which she dances joyously, she discovers that the slippers will not let her stop dancing—and the bewitched, exhausted girl dies. The film's story is, of course, the same story spelled out in more complicated terms, with the shoemaker of the ballet (Léonide Massine) replaced by the megalomaniac ballet impresario (Anton Walbrook). The exquisite young Moira Shearer is the ballerina; the cast includes Marius Goring as the young composer, Robert Helpmann, Albert Basserman, Ludmilla Tcherina, and Esmond Knight. Blubbery and self-conscious, but it affects some people *passionately*, and it's undeniably some kind of classic. Written, produced, and directed by Michael Powell and Emeric Pressburger—master purveyors of high kitsch.—P.K. (Museum of Modern Art; Jan. 24.)

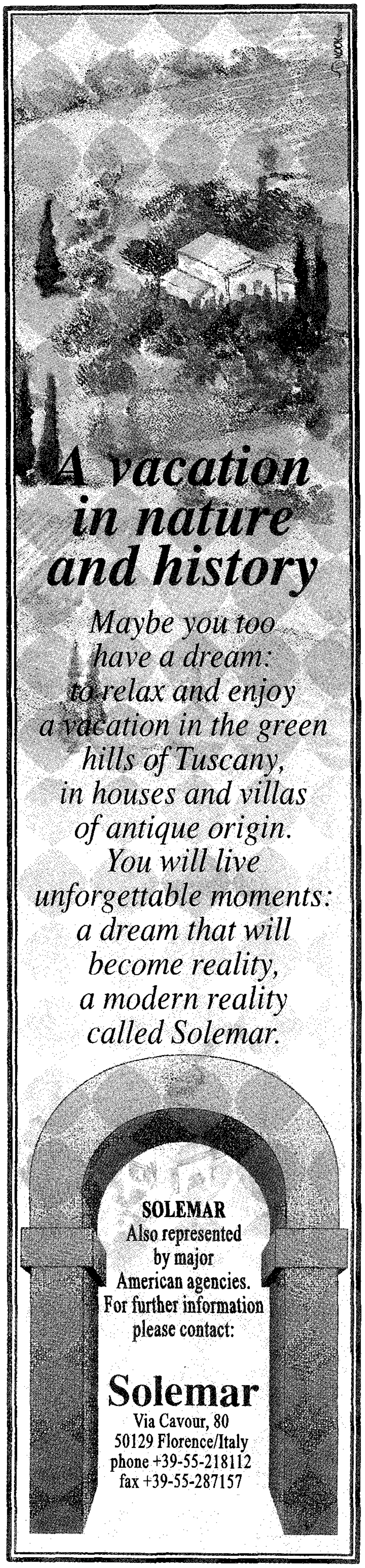
Scent of a Woman—Director Martin Brest and screenwriter Bo Goldman labor mightily to design a holiday-season heart-warmer about a middle-aged blind man and a troubled teen-ager (Chris O'Donnell), but fortunately their low intentions are undone by the star, Al Pacino, whose performance taps emotions too complex and too frightening to be resolved by the simple moral victory that ends the picture. His Frank Slade, a retired Army officer and former aide to L.B.J., is a bitter, misanthropic, profoundly depressed man, and the actor makes us feel the full weight of the character's hopelessness. This is acting that chills the heart beyond any possibility of warming. The filmmakers may dismiss the audience with a banal lesson written on the blackboard—"Smell the roses" is the gist—but by the end we're not paying much attention. We're still sorting out the ambiguities and uncomfortable truths that Pacino's great performance has let us in on. He has led us to the heart of darkness, and there's no quick route back. Also with James Rebhorn and Gabrielle Anwar.—T.R. (12/28/92-1/4/93) (First & 62nd Cinemas, Park & 86th Street Cinemas, Art Greenwich Twin, Chelsea Cinemas, Regency, and National Twin.)

Suzy (1936)—Jean Harlow in a pasted-together story about an American showgirl barging about London and Paris during the First World War. She marries Irish inventor Franchot Tone in London, then, thinking him dead, goes to Paris and marries famous French aviator Cary Grant. Naturally, Tone comes to Paris to work for Grant. . . . It's negligible, all right, but it isn't too awful, because Dorothy Parker and the other writers tossed in some dexterous badinage, and Grant brings an elfin bounce to his role, especially in the sequence in which Harlow is trying to sing and he demonstrates that he knows how. His song seems to tickle her—she smiles in a fresh, open way. (The clip appears in "That's Entertainment!") Benita Hume is the delectable villainess; with Lewis Stone, Inez Courtney, and Una O'Connor. Directed by George Fitzmaurice; based on a novel by Herbert Gorman.—P.K. (Film Forum 2; Jan. 23-24.)

Trespass—In Walter Hill's rock-the-house urban-siege suspense film, Bill Paxton and William Sadler play Arkansas firemen who follow a map to a stash of priceless gold church relics in an East St. Louis plant. Art Evans is the black squatter in their path, and Ice T and Ice Cube are the key members of an inner-city crime syndicate. They all collide—catastrophically. Hill doesn't belabor the point that the building and the battlefield it becomes are metaphors for the American city. The director plays that concept for raucous farce and rippling horror; he and his masterly editor, Freeman Davies, set off kinetic blasts in the midst of squalor. This film has the blaspheming explosiveness of contemporary black youth culture—it's visual rap. Robert Zemeckis and Bob Gale wrote the devilishly well-structured script; Ry Cooder composed the power-surging score.—M.S. (12/28/92-1/4/93) (Criterion Center. . . . ¶ Manhattan Twin; through Jan. 21.)

Unforgiven—Set in eighteen-eighties Kansas and Wyoming, this engrossing, moody Western is the sixteenth film Clint Eastwood has directed, and by far the best. The canny script, by David Webb Peoples, revives the old story about the retired gunfighter (Eastwood) who picks up his firearms again for one last score. But there's no easy resolution, and the movie is stronger because of its loose ends: the filmmakers acknowledge that the bloody chaos of an outlaw's life can't be settled in two hours and eleven minutes. The action begins when a cowboy slashes the face of a prostitute, and her co-workers pool their money to offer a reward for the murder of him and his partner. Jaimz Woolvett is the upstart who enlists Eastwood in the bounty hunt. Morgan Freeman plays Eastwood's longtime partner, Gene Hackman a megalomaniac sheriff, Richard Harris a flamboyant English gunslinger, and Saul Rubinek a dime novelist. This is the finest set of performances ever to grace a Clint Eastwood movie, and this time Eastwood even does a good job directing Eastwood. Every bullet in this movie matters; under its leathery hide is a genuine compulsion to deromanticize Western gunfighting.—M.S. (8/10/92) (Village East Cinemas.)

Vampyr (1932)—Most vampire movies are so silly that this film by Carl Dreyer—a great vampire film—hardly belongs to the genre. Dreyer preys upon our subconscious fears. Dread and obsession are the film's substance, and its mood is evocative, dreamy, spectral. Death hovers over everyone. The cast is headed by Julian West (the movie name of Nicholas de Gunzburg), with Henriette Gérard as the vampire, and Rena Mandel and Sybille Schmitz as her potential victims. The incomparable photographic effects are the work of Rudolph Maté. Movie-lovers may cherish what appears to be Dreyer's homage to Cocteau—the use of the little heart from "The Blood of a Poet." In German.—P.K. (Theatre 80 St. Marks; Jan. 25.)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THE NEW YORKER

THE TALK OF THE TOWN

A HELL OF A TOWN

Much to the dismay of the remaining members of their crews, the commemorative replicas of the Niña, the Pinta, and the Santa María which recently toured the United States in celebration of the quincentenary of Christopher Columbus's journey to the New World are unexpectedly stuck in New York, because of a lack of funds to finance their departure. They are currently moored in the Hudson River alongside the U.S.S. Intrepid, at Forty-fourth Street, and, next to the giant Second World War aircraft carrier, the three round-bellied boats look clownishly small to hold such an outsize place in history. Unlike the three American sailors let loose in the city in the musical "On the Town," the crew members—four Spaniards—who will be in New York through the winter to make sure the boats stay afloat, do not find New York a wonderful town. "I hate New York," says Rafael Fernández, who sailed to the New World aboard the Pinta. "I love the United States, but I hate New York. I was not able to find an apartment for two months, and my bicycle was stolen."

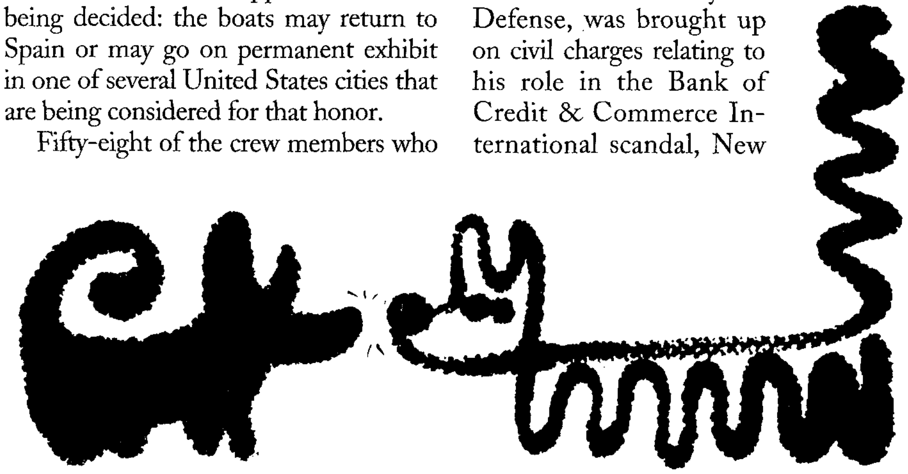
Of course, the enthusiastic sailors in "On the Town" had only twenty-four hours' shore leave; the Spanish sailors have been free to roam the city for the past twenty-one weeks and have been increasingly depressed by the experience. Before they finally managed to find an apartment, on East Forty-ninth Street, Rafael and one fellow-sailor, Francisco García, had to sleep for two months in fold-out bunks aboard the Pinta and the Santa María, keeping warm with electric space heaters and taking showers on the Intrepid. Their more fortunate colleagues, Antonio José Barrero and Pedro Amieva, have been living with friends on shore.

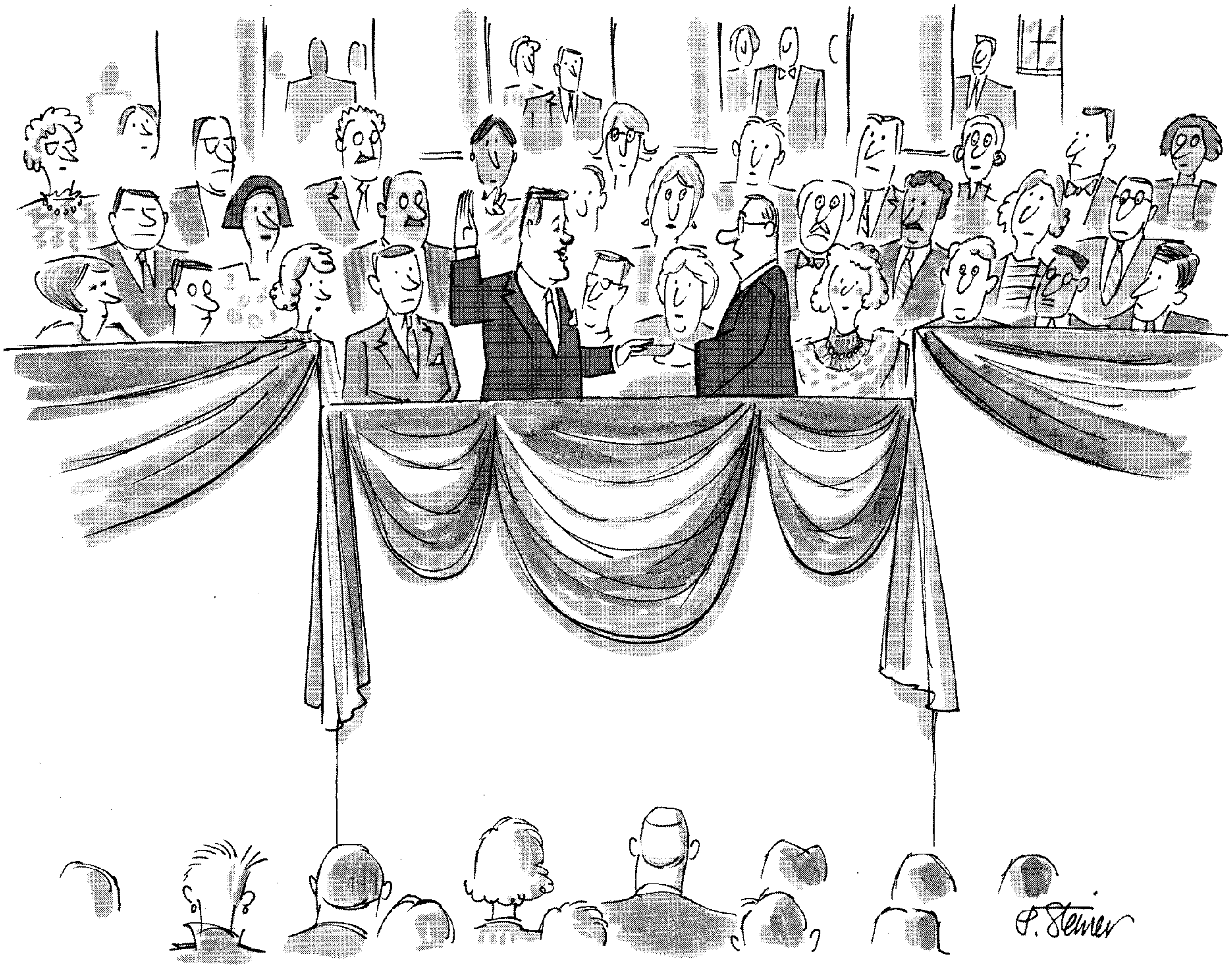
A long stay in New York was not on the original itinerary. The Niña, the Pinta, and the Santa María arrived in Miami, their first United States port, last February, and then visited eighteen cities on the Gulf and East Coasts. Stops at ports on the West Coast were cancelled when the Spanish government decided that it couldn't afford to send the ships that distance. (The tour has been particularly underfunded since Texaco withdrew a five-million-dollar sponsorship of the anniversary event, a step it took after Spanish officials failed to provide Texaco with certain documents, like proof of insurance. The Spanish government thereupon picked up most of the tab, which is reported to have come to fourteen million dollars: a million dollars for research, six million dollars for construction, and seven million dollars for a tour of Europe and the United States.) So the ships will remain moored beside the Intrepid Museum, and open for tours, through March. What is to happen then is still being decided: the boats may return to Spain or may go on permanent exhibit in one of several United States cities that are being considered for that honor.

Fifty-eight of the crew members who made the transatlantic journey in the ships returned to Spain in October to wait until the future of the vessels is decided; the four others have remained behind to do things like paint the ships' hulls and put antifreeze in the water in the bilge pumps. Despite their plight, they have been doing their best to keep themselves amused. The four have all taken up roller-blading and have become assiduous tourists. ("Museums, musicals, the Statue of Liberty, Ellis Island—what do you want to know? I can be your guide-tour," Rafael says.) Nor have they overlooked the traditional solace of homesick sailors. They once threw a party for two hundred people on the Santa María, and on New Year's Eve, after drinking an entire bottle of rum, Rafael and Francisco wandered the confusing streets of Greenwich Village, listing (so they demonstrated later) the way their ships had done when they hit bad weather last year off the coast of Virginia.

HARDSHIP CASE

In July, when Clark Clifford, the former Secretary of Defense, was brought up on civil charges relating to his role in the Bank of Credit & Commerce International scandal, New


LAURIE ROSENWALD



"Place your left hand on the Bible, raise your right hand, and repeat after me, 'Wow, I can't believe this is happening to me.'"

• •

York's District Attorney, Robert Morgenthau, froze all of Mr. Clifford's personal assets in New York State, which came to about eighteen million dollars. Clifford's lawyers protested, saying that the order would inflict "immediate and unjustified hardships" on Mr. Clifford. It would even deprive him of "funds to purchase food," they declared.

However, Mr. Clifford wanted to do more than purchase food. In a hitherto unreported affidavit to the judge in the civil case he wrote, "Many years ago, I decided to start helping our three daughters and twelve grandchildren, by making annual gifts." Mr. Clifford then listed the gifts:

Daughter Margery Lanagan, who is sixty years old, and five children—a total of approximately $105,000.00 per year.

Daughter Joyce Burland and three children—a total of approximately $98,000 per year.

Daughter Randall and four children—a total of approximately $120,000.00 per year.

The total comes to $324,465.00 per year.

"It has meant a great deal to them," Mr. Clifford went on, "and they have come to depend upon it." Mr. Clifford also wrote that he needed a hundred and eighty thousand dollars a year for personal expenses, which included "running our houses," and thirty-five thousand dollars a month for payments to "the Law Offices of Robert A. Altman." Mr. Altman is Mr. Clifford's co-defendant in the B.C.C.I. case and is also his former law partner. Mr. Clifford explained that it had become "necessary to make such payments to keep the law firm solvent." (According to an affidavit by the bookkeeper of the Altman firm, "one former employee has informed me that her retirement check has been rejected and a $5.00 charge imposed for submitting a dishonored check.") Finally, Mr. Clifford said he needed money to pay his legal fees, which had already amounted to $4,949,053 by last October.

Assistant District Attorney Anne Beane Rudman replied that the freeze should stay in effect. She said that Mr. Clifford's "cries of near starvation are clearly exaggerated," and that anyway he had other money stashed away outside the jurisdiction of New York State; Mr. Clifford had, for example, admitted having $1,926,000 in securities in Washington. That money, she said, should take care of any short-term cash-flow problems he might have.

But Mr. Clifford, it turned out, did not wish to part with his $1,926,000, because, his lawyers told the court, "Mr. Clifford is emotionally attached to these long-held securities." The securities, Mr. Clifford said, were in "companies which I have represented or upon whose Board of Directors I have served."

The civil-court judge, Justice Stephen G. Crane, was unmoved. In a decision filed on December 29, 1992, he noted that the purpose of civil-forfeiture actions such as this one was to "strip an alleged criminal of ill-gotten gains and preserve assets to compensate victims," and rejected Clifford's attempt to modify the freeze in any way. If disbursement of "the vast sums Mr. Clifford gives to his family members" were to be permitted, "a sluice, not a loophole, would be opened" in the law, the judge said.

Brushing aside Mr. Clifford's stated emotional attachment to his nearly two million dollars in stocks in Washington, the judge decided that with this money and a sum of more than four hundred thousand dollars that Mr. Clifford earned in 1991 he should be able to make do. As for the attorneys' fees, the judge declined to make any ruling until he learned more about them.

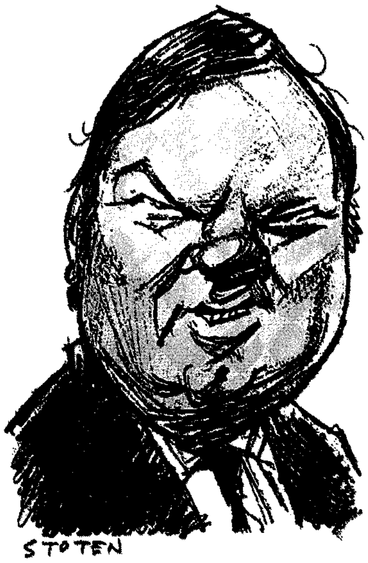
So Mr. Clifford lost on all counts. But Justice Crane's cruellest blow may have been his observation that, on the basis of his review of the evidence, there was a "substantial probability" that Mr. Clifford would be convicted in the criminal case against him. That bad news was compounded last Tuesday when the judge in the criminal case, Justice John A. K. Bradley, rejected Mr. Clifford's claim that his age, eighty-six, and ill health prevented him from going to trial, as scheduled, on February 15th.

BEYOND QUESTION

THE Senate does not keep records on this sort of thing, but it is believed that until last week no committee had ever voted to confirm a Cabinet nominee *before* questioning him. That is what happened to Senator Lloyd Bentsen, who, having done no more than make an opening statement, was confirmed as Treasury Secretary by the Senate Finance Committee on Tuesday. In the opinion of one sardonic congressional staffer who was present, this is a

APPLE OF THE TIMES

THE *Times's* newest Washington bureau chief dresses well for posh interviews. "It wouldn't do to look like a grease monkey," he once wrote. He enjoys wearing brightly striped or checked shirts from Harvie & Hudson, in London, because they cheer him up on gloomy days. An unabashed Anglophile and a Continental-style gourmand, he carries a pepper mill when he travels. He owns a stone cottage in the Cotswolds, and makes cultural pilgrimages to Paris and London.



DAVID STOTEN

R. W. Apple, Jr., is called Johnny by his friends. The initials stand for Raymond Walter, but that name was banished at birth. His father was called Johnny—after Johnny Appleseed—when he played football at Wittenberg College, in Ohio. Apple, Jr., took the name to Princeton. He was expelled; he graduated from Columbia, magna cum laude; and he was snapped up, after two jobs, by the *Times*. "The New York *Times* is an important newspaper," he says in a stout voice. "Washington's movers and shakers are conscious of that, and wish to be well regarded by it. That is both an opportunity and a snare."

Apple swivels happily in his chair. He does not seem wary of his status, or displeased by it. On one wall of his office, which is long and commodious, are six framed maps of French provinces from Napoleon's time. Three indicate the origins of Apple's favorite wines; three his favorite after-dinner drinks (Armagnac, Cognac, Calvados). "In this city, social position is entirely related to one's work," he says. "It's a lot like being an ambassador. You are ambassador one day, and the next, if you decide to go home, nobody notices very much."

Johnny Apple looks like a saloon-era tough customer, and maybe he is. He has a tight, round face, a barrel chest, and a quick, bowlegged walk. He will wing through the bureau, tapping desks, giving silent reporters the thumbs-up sign. In repose, he cultivates a deliberate, courtly air, and when he smiles broadly you can't see his teeth. He has had a reputation at the *Times* for being tempestuous and quick to blow his own horn, and will admit now to a stately kind of curmudgeonhood.

Apple says his favorite dish is sauerkraut and sausages. For lunch, he eats plenty of salad. "Washington is not my favorite restaurant town," he says. Adjectives he applies to the city are "inbred," "intense," "greedy." He has served here for seven out of thirty years with the paper, but says he was surprised that he got the top job, because the tradition of a writing bureau chief, cultivated by Arthur Krock and James Reston, and carried on by Tom Wicker and Max Frankel, had lately been abandoned. His immediate predecessors acted principally as managers.

Apple thinks that the Inaugural frenzy this week is unique, and a little distasteful. "Hoke and hype," he called it last week, and until recently his paper has reflected that view. Apple will attend no theme festivals, no balls, no promenades. He will watch the parade with diplomats and friends at the Canadian Embassy. "We're in the same business," he says. "Gossip and information." And the rest of the day? "Working!" cries Apple, of the *Times*. "What else!"

—ADAM PLATT

useful innovation, and will no doubt be considered by other committees as they undertake future confirmation hearings, since getting the vote out of the way right at the start makes the ensuing conversation much more relaxed.

Late in the morning, eleven of the twenty senators on the Senate Finance Committee were in their places on the dais. Senator Bentsen, who had chaired the Senate Finance Committee for the last six years, was sitting at the witness table in front of his old colleagues. His wife was sitting just behind him, and behind her the committee room was full of spectators. Everyone was waiting a little impatiently for the other committee members to arrive.

Senator Robert Dole, who is known for his sense of nihilistic mischief, turned to an aide and said, "Why not vote now?"

"I hear the suggestion that a vote be taken now, and I think it is a gracious suggestion," declared Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan, who is the new chairman of the committee, and who, like Mr. Dole, is known to be impatient with cant. "I'm going to take the inspired suggestion of the Republican leader if I have the concurrence of the ranking." ("We had a quorum," Mr. Moynihan explained later, "and we didn't want to lose it.")

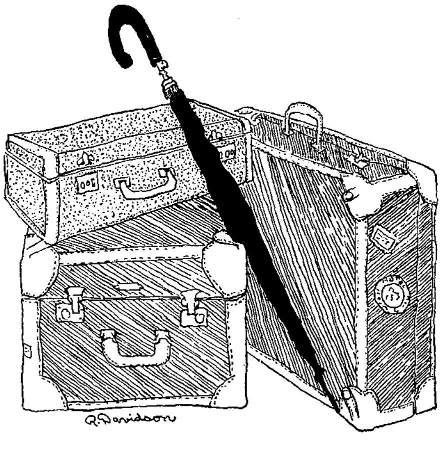
Mr. Moynihan then asked the clerk to call the roll. The other senators, looking a little unsure of themselves, one by one voted to confirm. When all present had voted aye and proxies from several of the missing senators had been collected, Senator Moynihan looked around at the empty chairs and, after pondering for a few seconds, announced that the vote was unanimous. (Senator Bill Bradley, arriving late at the hearing, looked thunderstruck when an aide leaned forward and whispered in his ear, "You've already voted.") Then Senator Moynihan rose from his chair and, facing Senator Bentsen, began to clap his hands slowly. The other senators looked at each other, rose, and applauded, and the audience got to its feet, too.

Senator Bentsen, whose testimony was to form the basis for determining whether or not he was qualified to run the I.R.S., the Customs Service, the Secret Service, and the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms, to serve as the government's paymaster, and to have his name printed on the nation's currency, had not yet been asked a question. After sustained applause, everyone sat down again. Senator Moynihan called the committee to order, and the confirmation hearing got under way. To Mr. Bentsen it must have seemed a surreal experience, like a sort of positive lynching. Confirm him now! We'll have the hearing later!

ASHES TO ASHES

THE other day, the lethal effects of secondhand smoke were everywhere in the news. The Environmental Protection Agency concluded that passive smoking really does cause cancer, fatal to three thousand people a year. As a result, some altruists have stopped blowing smoke into the atmosphere, as mass murder was never their intention, while some non-altruists, too terrified to identify themselves, remain fond of cigarette smoke and prefer to live alongside it in one form or another.

A woman in East Setauket, after hearing the news from the E.P.A., promised her husband and children that she would never smoke in the house again. Instead, she said, every single night for a month she would watch Jean-Paul Belmondo smoke in Jean-Luc Godard's 1959 film "Breathless." Within ten seconds after the film begins, she explained, there is a closeup of Belmondo wearing a dark hat with a brim and smoking a very white cigarette into the camera. Two minutes later, Belmondo is smoking and driving in the countryside ("*J'aime beaucoup la France*," he says to himself), and soon thereafter comes the moment the woman loves best: Belmondo with one hand on the steering wheel, the other hand aiming a pistol out the window, and a Gitane adhering to his sumptuous lower lip. How does he keep it there? Is this a special French talent? Belmondo also manages to balance a cigarette between his lips, exhale smoke, and talk to Jean Seberg—who died of barbiturates, not of secondhand smoke inhalation. ("*Je ne suis pas spécialement beau, mais je suis un grand boxeur*," he is saying to her.)



Some people talk about secondhand smoke with enduring affection. An American who grew up in Cannes in the thirties, a son of famously glamorous parents (both chain-smokers), said that he longed to have people smoke in his presence. He said that it made him sick to see young women forced to stand outside office buildings in the freezing cold, puffing pointlessly into the sky. He also said that cigarette smoke was one of his early-childhood memories. "Always I was smoked at by my parents," he said. "Wherever they were, there were clouds of smoke, even when they were gazing down on me in the crib."

Did they take him to the beach and smoke?

"No. Nanny did the beach."

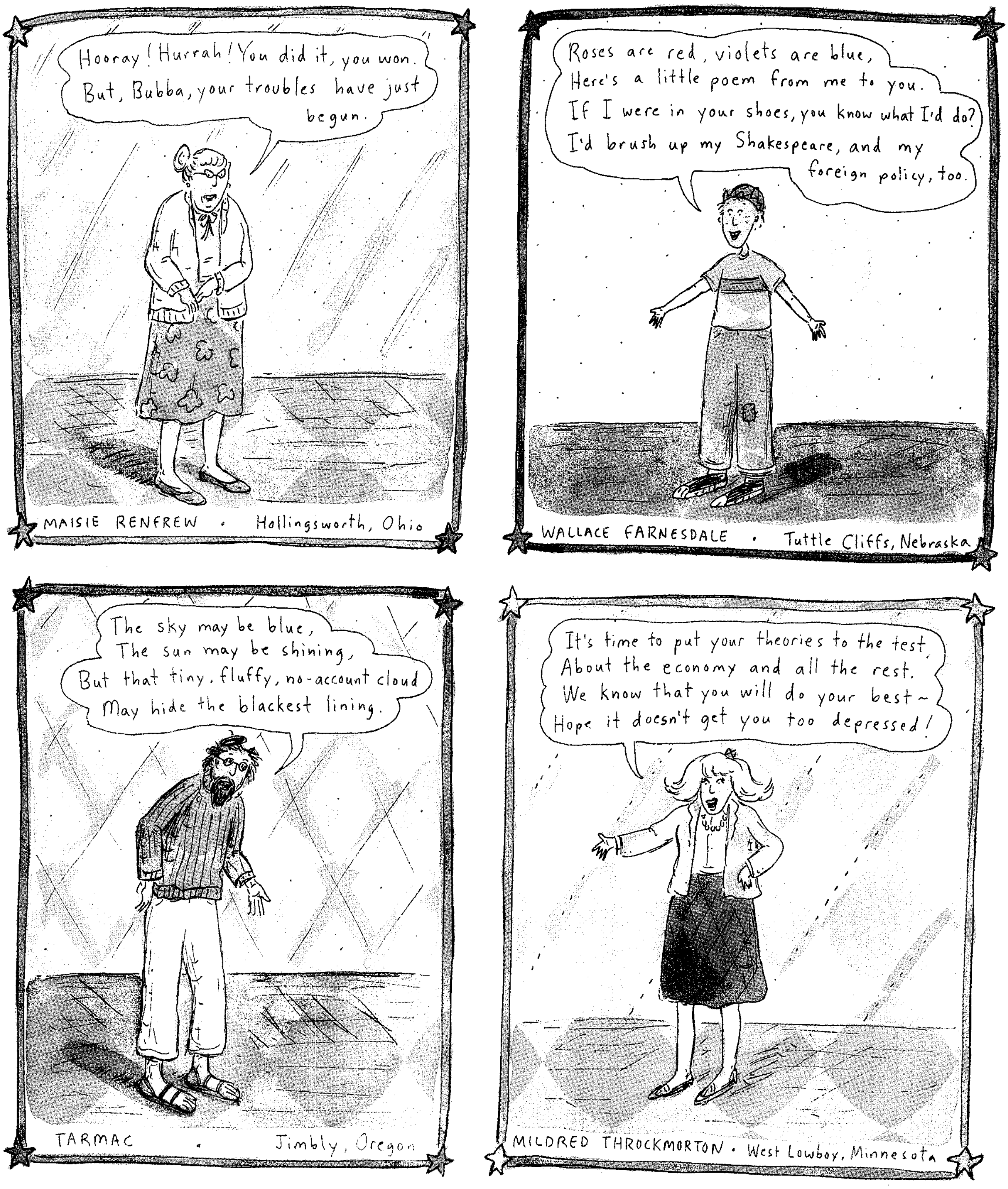
A cosmetics executive in midtown Manhattan, when she was asked about her views on secondhand smoke, picked up a Marlboro Light and tapped her foot impatiently. As she lit up, she asked, "Is it going to make people outlaw me, lock me in a little box to smoke alone until I die?"

An Englishman who has smoked compulsively for decades in cities all over the world pointed out that A.S.H., Action on Smoking and Health, in London, had endorsed the bad news about passive smoke on the same day the E.P.A. made its announcement. "Maybe they got together to terrorize the whole world in one day," he said. "Maybe the three thousand Americans die from *other* weird stuff. They can't prove that the smoke is responsible. The claim gives prigs and bores and Fascists the right to be horrid."

Was there anywhere in the world where smoking would feel safe?

"On my first trip to America, my favorite place was North Carolina. In Winston-Salem, there were cigarettes everywhere. Every room had bowls of them on every surface. I thought I might settle there." ♦

PASSED OVER AT THE
INAUGURAL POETRY AUDITION


Hooray! Hurrah! You did it, you won.
But, Bubba, your troubles have just begun.
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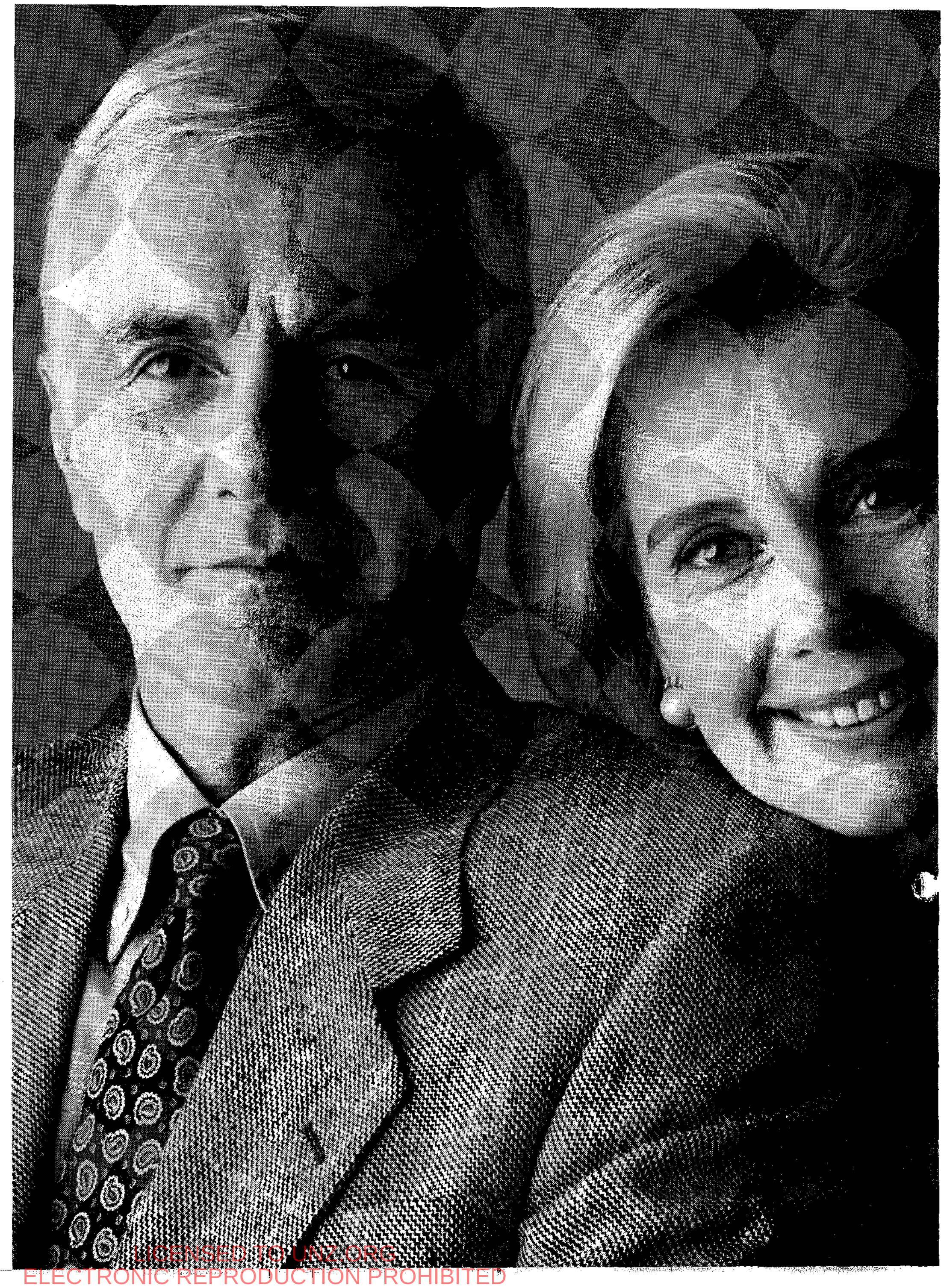
Roses are red, violets are blue,
Here's a little poem from me to you.
If I were in your shoes, you know what I'd do?
I'd brush up my Shakespeare, and my foreign policy, too.
WALLACE FARNESDALE • Tuttle Cliffs, Nebraska
The sky may be blue,
The sun may be shining,
But that tiny, fluffy, no-account cloud
May hide the blackest lining.
TARMAC • Jimbly, Oregon
It's time to put your theories to the test,
About the economy and all the rest.
We know that you will do your best –
Hope it doesn't get you too depressed!
MILDRED THROCKMORTON • West Lowboy, Minnesota
R. Chast

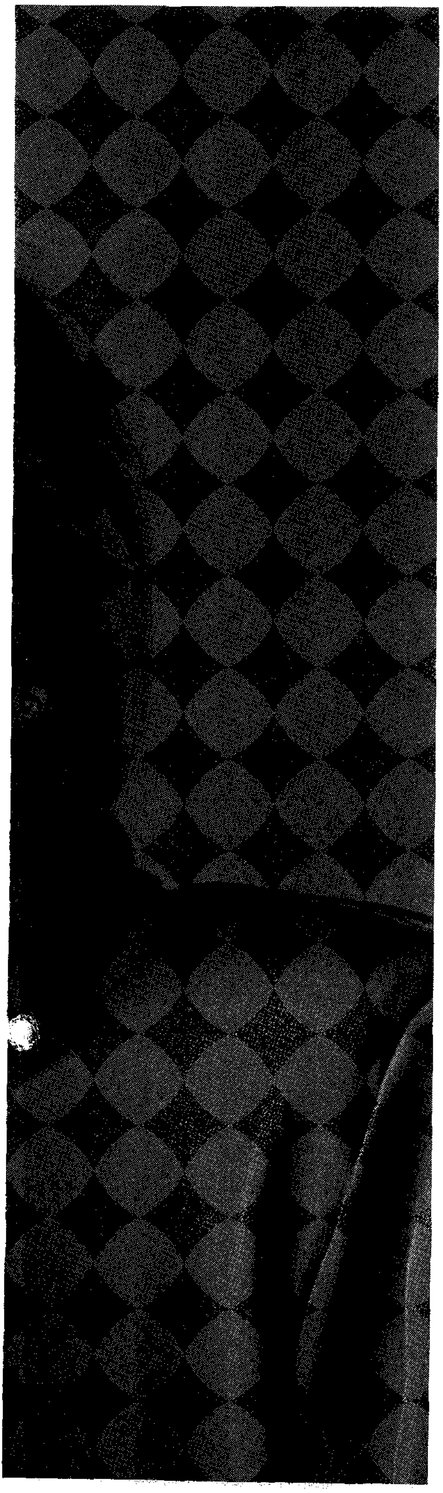
What every man should know about his prostate.



What and where the prostate is

Only men have a prostate. It's a walnut-sized gland located at the base of the bladder. It surrounds a part of the urethra, the tube that carries urine from the bladder through the penis.

The prostate supplies the milky fluid that helps transport sperm through the penis during ejaculation. The prostatic fluid also aids conception by providing support and nourishment for the sperm and helping to make the vaginal canal less acidic.



What an enlarged prostate is

In most men, after age 45, the prostate starts to enlarge and may continue to enlarge for the rest of a man's life. This growth may be benign prostate enlargement, a non-cancerous condition. A major cause is the activity of a key hormone.

By itself, benign prostate enlargement isn't a problem. But as the prostate continues to grow, it can squeeze the urethra (like pinching a straw) and interfere with the normal flow of urine, causing uncomfortable and embarrassing symptoms.

Benign prostate enlargement is a common medical finding in older men. However, not every man develops the condition, and in those who do, it is not always progressive.

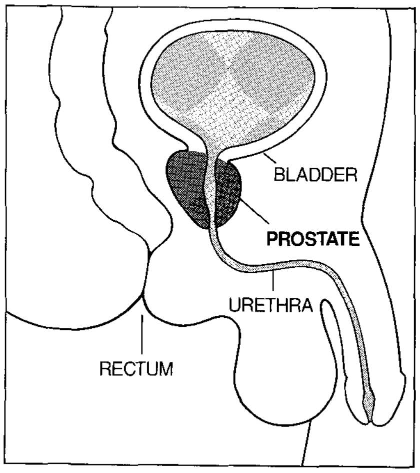
The urinary symptoms of an enlarged prostate

Among the symptoms commonly associated with an enlarged prostate are more frequent urination, especially during the night, or the sudden, almost uncontrollable urge to urinate. The added pressure on the urethra can also cause a weak, interrupted urine stream, a sense of the bladder not emptying completely, leakage, and difficulty in starting urination. It can even result in total blockage, a serious condition.

Why you should consult the doctor

Symptomatic benign prostate enlargement can be helped. Recent advances in treatment have been made, and today your doctor has several options. So now, more than ever, is an excellent time to consult your doctor. You and your doctor should discuss which treatment option would be best for you.

If you experience any symptoms, see your doctor and speak frankly about the problem. A simple rectal examination enables the doctor to feel, with a gloved finger, the size and condition of the prostate. This exam, and other tests the doctor may recommend, will also help to rule out the possibility of prostate cancer. Benign prostate enlargement is not cancer and does not turn into cancer.



The prostate is located at the base of the bladder. It surrounds a part of the urethra, the tube that carries urine from the bladder through the penis. As the prostate enlarges, it can squeeze the urethra and cause urinary problems.

These days, prostate problems don't have to interfere with living your life to the fullest. That's what every man should know.

Talk to your doctor, soon. And, for a free booklet with more information, call 1-800-635-4452.

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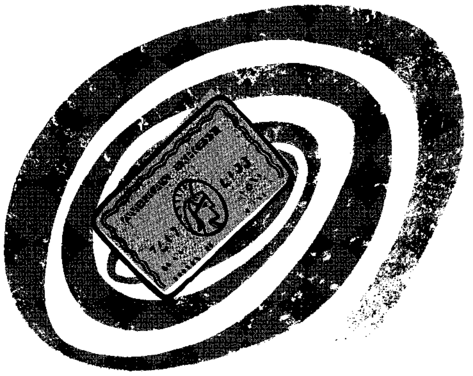
THE WORLD OF BUSINESS

WILD CARD

Harvey Golub has a big house, but does he have a big enough vision to succeed James Robinson at American Express?

BY JAMES B. STEWART



ROBERT DEMICHIEL

LAST February, at a meeting of the American Express board of directors, James D. Robinson III, the urbane, soft-spoken Southerner who has been chairman of the company for fifteen years, promised to outline a plan of succession at the board's next meeting, to be held in September. Although his retirement wasn't perceived to be imminent, either by him or by the board, which was viewed on Wall Street as singularly docile and loyal, he was, at fifty-six, under mounting pressure to begin the long process of grooming someone who might eventually fill his shoes. Robinson had tried before, but his track record was unimpressive. First, there was Alva Way, a former General Electric executive who proved ineffectual and moved elsewhere. Then came Sanford I. (Sandy) Weill, who quit after alienating some directors by trying to lead a buyout of an Amex subsidiary, Fireman's Fund. Louis Gerstner, Jr., the only potential successor many members of the board actually liked, had left Amex in 1989 to become chairman of RJR Nabisco. Nevertheless, some board members were unprepared for Robinson's latest choice, which they learned about during the summer: Harvey Golub, an aggressive, loud-voiced former McKinsey & Company consultant who had been named Amex's president only a year before.

At the September board meeting, held at the St. Regis Hotel, Robinson reiterated his choice of Golub. He acknowledged that Golub, who is fifty-three, might seem "unseasoned" and insufficiently steeped in the Amex culture to become its chief executive, but he assured the directors that by the time he was ready to step down as chief executive—at some hazy juncture two or three years off—Golub would be ready to take over. Robinson's choice has triggered a behind-the-scenes drama that has divided the once collegial group of business and civic leaders into bitter factions. "There are people on the board who are maliciously negative on Jim Robinson," contends board member Drew Lewis, the C.E.O. of the Union Pacific Corporation and a Robinson loyalist. (Robinson also serves on the Union Pacific board.) "Take Howard Clark, Sr., and Rawleigh Warner. They're out to get Harvey as an extension of Jim. They're out to scalp him."

Because Golub is Jewish, allegations of anti-Semitism have been the latest explosive element. While some board members deny that anti-Semitism is a factor—Lewis, for example, says he didn't even know that Golub is Jewish—other Golub partisans insist that it has played a role in some board members' opposition to him. Some Golub opponents express outrage at the charge, saying that it is not only false but a thinly disguised attempt to blackmail them into supporting Golub. They argue that they have plenty of other grounds for opposing him, including his role in an embarrassing age-discrimination suit, and a lavish estate in Minnesota for which Amex is footing the bill.

The conflict is being played out against a sad history of anti-Semitism on Wall Street, which includes an incident in the last century when an American Express chairman wrote of a job applicant, "Do not like the name Cohn. Sounds somewhat Jewish." But the breach within the Amex board is far broader and more complex, going to the very identity of a company that has embodied American financial ingenuity and integrity. Much like I.B.M. and General Motors, American Express has watched its core business—the familiar green travel-and-entertainment card that revolutionized Americans' spending habits—evolve into little more than a commodity more cheaply supplied by others. In addition to Visa and MasterCard, it faces a host of newer competitors, among them the giant A.T. & T., which stunned Amex last year by winning the coveted Baldridge quality award for its management of its new Universal credit card.

For some years, a debate has been raging within Amex about whether the company should accept the inevitable decline of The Card (as it's always called) and concentrate on diversification, especially into the competitive world of revolving-credit cards, or whether it should refocus its resources on what made the company great—building The Card as a profitable niche product for affluent consumers all over the world. It's a tribute to Robinson's considerable charm and diplomatic skills that he has managed to placate advocates of both strategic approaches, on the board and within the company, while seeming to pursue both options. But, with failures in both endeavors mounting at a worrisome rate, Robinson was finally being pressed into a choice. In casting his lot in with Golub, he could hardly have found anyone more likely to inflame the Old Guard loyalists of The Card, who are personified by Howard Clark, Sr.

Clark, a revered figure known for his integrity, took the helm of American Express in 1960. A veteran of Harvard Law and the eminent Wall Street law firm Sullivan & Cromwell, he presided over an unbroken string of annual profit increases until his retirement, in 1977—a feat that is referred to even today as "the record." Clark inherited a company that had begun its existence a century earlier as an express carrier, transporting small packages, important messages, and, especially, cash. Eventually, its business evolved into money orders, and then, in an innovation that remains synonymous with the company's name, travellers' checks. A charge card was introduced in 1958, and soon American Express launched its first national advertising campaign, with the slogan "The company for people who travel."

Clark had joined American Express in 1948, and was steeped in the culture of the company, which through two world wars had stood by its vow to merchants and consumers to honor its checks and charges. He liked to remind employees that everyone who bought a travellers' check was relying on American Express's explicit promise to redeem it. In 1963, Amex faced potentially ruinous losses in the so-called salad-oil scandal, after it guaranteed to banks the inventory of a vegetable-oil-refining company that later proved to be nonexistent. Though it could be argued that American Express wasn't obligated to make up the losses to creditors of the fraudulent concern, Clark insisted that the company had a "moral obligation" to pay creditors who had relied on Amex's assurances. That stand ultimately cost Amex sixty million dollars, but it reaped untold good will on Wall Street and within the broader financial community, and Amex went on to greater triumphs. Clark is still often quoted as saying, "The promise to pay is the heart and soul of this company."

IN Jim Robinson, who was born into Atlanta society and was a product of Harvard Business School, Morgan Guaranty Trust, and the staid investment-banking firm White, Weld & Company, Clark found a successor not only to his title but to his spirit. Clark groomed him for seven years before handing over the reins. Even afterward, Clark remained very much a part of the company: as chairman emeritus, he served on its board, and his son, Howard, Jr., assumed various executive positions in the Robinson regime. Until recently, Clark is said to have regarded Robinson, a physical-fitness fanatic known to be unflappable in a crisis, almost as another son. (Today, a colleague says, he regards him as a "wayward son.")

But Clark never showed much enthusiasm for Robinson's own heirs, apparent or presumptive. Clark was particularly distressed by Sandy Weill's effort to lead a leveraged buyout of Amex's Fireman's Fund unit after replacing Clark on the unit's board. Weill, who is Jewish, insists to this day that Clark's hostility to him is rooted in anti-Semitism.

Clark's distaste for Golub is said to be equally pronounced. Few at the elegant American Express headquarters tower, at the World Financial Center in Manhattan, had met Golub before late 1989—soon after Lou Gerstner deserted Robinson for Henry Kravis, whose firm

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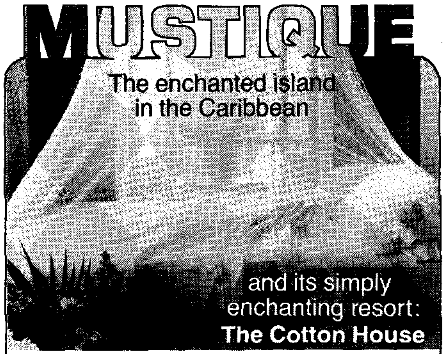
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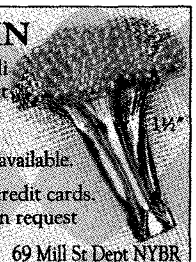

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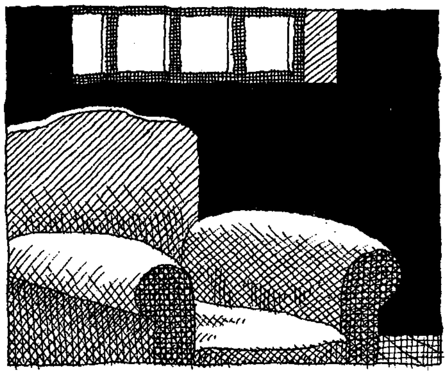
had just bought RJR Nabisco, in the biggest leveraged buyout in history. Gerstner's departure, in March of 1989, could hardly have come at a worse time for Robinson. Robinson's bold effort at diversification into financial services was being tarred by scandal at one subsidiary, the Boston Company, and by mounting losses at his giant brokerage and investment-banking operation, Shearson Lehman.

In 1989, Golub was living in Minneapolis, where he was chairman of Investors Diversified Services, a subsidiary acquired by Amex five years earlier. As a McKinsey consultant, Golub had shopped I.D.S. to Amex, arguing that the conservatively run company, which sold mostly mutual funds and insurance, fit perfectly into Amex's diversification plans. After Amex bought it, Golub had been recruited to head I.D.S. by Sandy Weill, then president of Amex, and the two had become close friends; when Golub's youngest son was born, Weill became the child's godfather. Golub turned out to be right about I.D.S.: shifting the product mix and aggressively cutting costs made it one of the few bright spots among Amex's acquisitions, with earnings growing at an average of twenty-three per cent a year through the eighties. Impressed by those results and by Golub's experience as a consultant, Robinson began importing him to New York for strategy sessions, and soon Golub was spending two or three days a week huddled in Robinson's office.

Physically, Golub was hard to miss, with his bulk, red suspenders, bushy mustache, loud voice, and ever-present cigarettes or pipe. By Amex standards, he is brash, occasionally violating the company's culture by upbraiding subordinates in front of their colleagues. Given his close relationship with Weill, he was immediately seen as suspect by some top executives—especially those in the Travel Related Services division, known as T.R.S., which has traditionally been the heart of the company. These executives were marketing-driven; they understood Amex's customers. Golub, as a former management consultant, was a strategist; he understood Wall Street analysts. Golub annoyed the marketing crowd by using consultant-style buzzwords, like "reëngineering" when he meant cost-cutting.

Culturally, Golub had little in common with his new colleagues. He grew up in Brooklyn; several of his father's small-business ventures went bankrupt. He flunked out of Cornell before graduating from New York University, and he had no graduate degree. Apart from his tenure at I.D.S., he had little hands-on management experience; he'd been fired after three years as president of a New Jersey trucking company. Still, there was widespread admiration for Golub's go-for-the-jugular analytical skills and his ability to focus the energies of those who worked for him. Robinson, who is widely praised for his ability to overlook superficial flaws and recognize intelligence and talent, was quickly smitten. In September of 1990, he named Golub vice-chairman of Amex, though Golub continued to live in Minneapolis and retained his title of I.D.S. chairman. Under pressure from the Amex board to name a replacement for Gerstner, Robinson gave Golub the title of Amex president in July of 1991. Though the move seemed to plant Golub firmly as Robinson's heir apparent, Robinson took pains to assure the board that this wasn't necessarily the case, mentioning publicly, for example, that Howard Clark, Jr., who had taken the helm of Shearson Lehman at the height of its crisis, remained a contender. (In reality, few believed that Clark, who isn't known for his dynamism, had any real chance.)

Despite Robinson's disclaimers, there was concern on the board about Golub's swift ascent. There was internal opposition to him; and there were hints that Robinson had detected anti-Semitism in some reactions to Golub. One T.R.S. executive, who describes himself as a close friend of Robinson's, says he ticked off a series of objections to Golub—"He has no international experience, he doesn't understand marketing"—and that Robinson listened, but then looked him in the eye and asked, "Are you anti-Semitic?" The question brought the conversation to a stop.



Just three months after his new promotion, Golub was named to the additional position of C.E.O. of Travel Related Services, putting him in charge of the group that contained his most vigorous critics. His immediate mandate was to solve the problems stemming from Amex's disappointing 1987 foray into revolving credit with its Optima card. Amex traditionalists had opposed Optima from the outset, arguing that it would compete with the Amex charge card, which, unlike revolving-credit cards, requires monthly payment of the full amount owed. Revolving credit, they argued, was a business that Amex didn't understand. At the time, though, the logic of the move had seemed unassailable. Amex already had an enviable pool of high-net-worth cardholders, who were the people least likely to default on their credit-card bills. But high-net-worth Amex cardholders, already deluged with credit offers, were slow to see the advantages of Optima. Worst of all, the people who did go for the card turned out to be some of the least-creditworthy borrowers: accounts unpaid after a hundred and eighty days quickly soared to twice the national average of four per cent.

Golub's approach was characteristic, further angering some T.R.S. executives. He urged the company to confront the problem, rather than soft-pedal it, and take an immediate financial hit, thereby establishing a low earnings base for future comparisons. Many Wall Street analysts, obsessed with quarterly earnings reports, love such an approach, which has the virtue of getting bad news out of the way, but to Amex traditionalists, steeped in the lore of "the record," it was heresy. In early October, just before Golub formally assumed control of T.R.S., Amex acted on his proposal by announcing a two-hundred-and-sixty-five-million-dollar writeoff to the unit's earnings, resulting in the first quarterly loss in T.R.S.'s history.

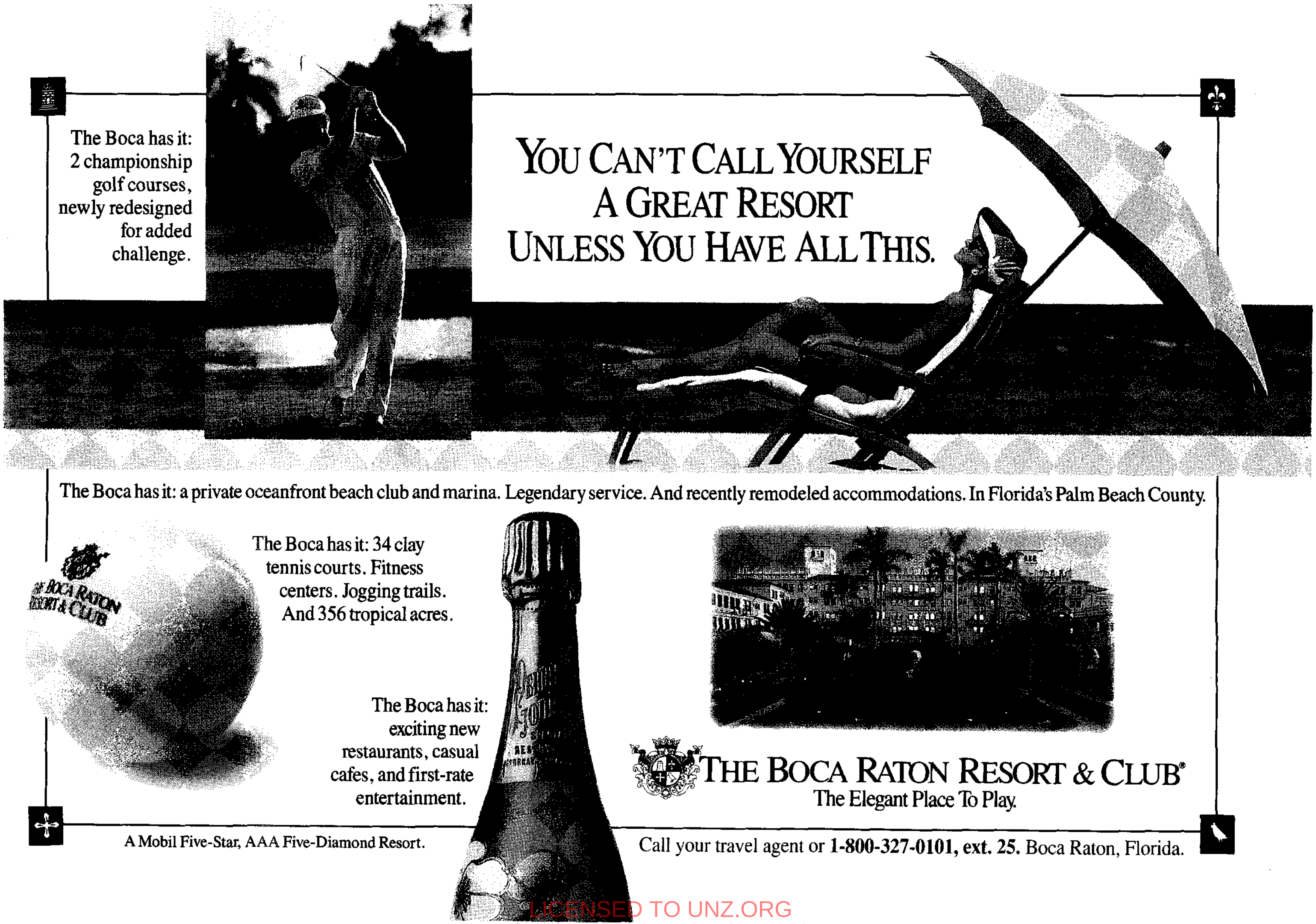
Golub faced even more fundamental problems. During the free-spending eighties, Travel Related Services had thrived as newly affluent yuppies became cardholders and users. T.R.S. marketing was hailed for giving the American Express card a cachet that distinguished it from more common rivals. "Portraits," an award-winning campaign that featured stylish photographs by Annie Leibovitz of celebrities like Tip O'Neill, Ella Fitzgerald, and Tom Seaver, and "Interesting Lives," a campaign that showed people, especially women, using the card in appealing situations, apparently made people want to use their Amex cards. So did the company's "cause-related" marketing, in which the company made contributions based on cardholder spending, to institutions such as the Statue of Liberty, and Lincoln Park Zoo, in Chicago. But when the recession swept through the ranks of young middle managers the number of cardholders began to shrink at the alarming rate of a million per year, and Golub had already begun to experiment with new ad campaigns. The cachet that Amex had spent millions in advertising to acquire began to dissipate.

In his eagerness for change, however, Golub immediately stepped on others' toes. Without telling his own colleagues, let alone Amex's long-standing ad agency, Ogilvy & Mather, he discussed marketing strategy with a Minneapolis agency, Fallon McElligott, which then created a TV campaign attacking Visa. American Express had long considered it undignified and counterproductive to attack a competitor directly. T.R.S. executives were thus stunned when they saw the less than subtle result: images of a giant Visa card being sawed in half with a blowtorch. Other T.R.S. executives succeeded in vetoing the campaign, and it never ran.

That September, just before Golub's elevation to T.R.S. chairman, Minnesotans were buzzing about what was being billed locally as the party of the year. Large, square invitations, printed on the diagonal in flowing script, had arrived in the mail: "Roberta & Harvey Golub and Judi & David Liametz invite you to experience a special home inspired by nature, responsive to lifestyle, and enhanced by friendship." The "home," in the affluent suburb of Edina, had been custom-designed for the Golubs by Liametz, a close friend, and had been under construction for two years.

The invitation hardly prepared the guests for what awaited them. Valet-parking attendants greeted them at the end of a circular driveway designed to accommodate stretch limousines. The house itself occupied fifteen thousand square feet, and was filled with hand-etched glass panels, hand-carved stone, and custom-made carpets that echoed themes in the inlaid-wood floors and panelling. One room contained an automated feeding center for the family's pets. The master spa bath encircled a sybaritic two-person shower in a glass-block cylinder, and another spa area featured a large Jacuzzi between two picture windows offering views of a pond and the surrounding landscape. An entertainment center with a full-size movie screen and professional stereo equipment occupied the lower level. A four-car garage contained its own automatic car wash.

Since the Golubs were even then in the process of moving to the New York area, they were destined never to occupy the house. It went on the market for $6.9 million, the highest price ever sought for a residential resale in Minnesota. Minnesotans pride themselves on their civic



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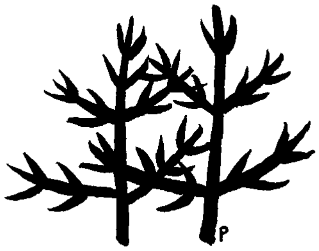
virtue, charitable contributions, and inconspicuous consumption; even the Pillsbury family estate had sold recently in the neighborhood of only five million dollars, and members of the Dayton family, heirs to a department-store fortune, live in comfortable but far more modest houses. The same could be said of Howard Clark, who lives in the wealthy but determinedly low-key enclave of Hobe Sound, Florida.

Golub's friendship with Liametz also raised some eyebrows. Liametz and his wife followed Golub to Minneapolis from New Jersey, and the designer cut a swath through the staid local architecture community. He dresses almost entirely in black, wears numerous rings, drives a black Porsche, and likes to compare himself to Frank Lloyd Wright. (The Golub house bears a vague resemblance to Wright's prairie-style structures.) Golub soon tapped Liametz to redesign I.D.S.'s headquarters, to work on a new back-office complex, and, ultimately, to be in charge of a new sixty-five-story tower in downtown Minneapolis. In the end, Amex scrapped the last of the plans. Meanwhile, it turned out that Liametz himself isn't a licensed architect. (Several architects work for him.) Liametz recently directed the renovation of a house for Golub in Saddle River, New Jersey, which is even larger than the Edina house—though more traditional, Liametz has said.

The Edina open house had seemed particularly ill timed in the wake of numerous firings at I.D.S., not to mention Amex's own efforts to deëmphasize conspicuous consumption in the nineties. Much of I.D.S.'s earnings gains had come from the introduction of new products and from a shift to financial planning for clients—along with sound advice not to panic after the 1987 market crash—but much had also come from cost reductions, including firings. In January of 1989, in a case that attracted much attention in Minnesota, where job security has been an important political issue, thirty-two former I.D.S. division managers (out of about eighty who were dismissed or quit) had filed a suit alleging age discrimination. All had been fired during Golub's tenure at the helm of I.D.S., when all were over forty. Since the firings involved some of the highest-paid employees, who would also have been entitled to ever-increasing retirement benefits, they represented significant savings for I.D.S.



I.D.S. took an unusually harsh line for a major employer, not only vowing to fight the suit but publicly naming and denouncing some of the plaintiffs as laggards with personality problems and saying that all of them had been fired for cause. Still, the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission found that the suit had merit, and joined the case on behalf of the plaintiffs. And there was some disturbing evidence to support the claims of age discrimination, including evidence that Golub himself had instigated and encouraged it.

In depositions in the case, for example, witnesses reported a number of instances in which Golub discussed older managers at national meetings, suggesting that such managers might not be comfortable with the changes he was making, and "might not be around"—a concept that became known as the "comfort-level problem." In a 1985 memorandum, Golub complained about the lack of turnover among division managers. "Reduce the average age, especially at the top" was also listed in a document purporting to identify I.D.S.'s "corporate objectives."

An I.D.S. vice-president, John Golden, further defined the comfort-level problem in his deposition testimony: "Older people were the people who didn't work hard. Older people were the people who paid their mortgages, sent their kids to college. They weren't interested in working hard. So we've got a problem with these older people who are too comfortable in their position."

One of the plaintiffs, John Lose, testified that he was told by his regional vice-president that Harvey Golub "wanted the older managers out of the company" and wanted him fired. In his case, the firing was carried out with little finesse; a witness testified to this lecture to Lose from his superior: "You dinosaurs have already done it. Now let the young guys do it. You should be glad you are going to be out of business and playing golf while these guys are doing it and working their rear ends off." The case survived several I.D.S. motions to dismiss and was slated for trial in 1992.

ONCE Golub was settled in New York, in the fall of 1991, he set about stemming the decline at Travel Related Services. Two of his top colleagues, Edwin M. Cooperman and G. Richard Thoman, quit rather than work under him. In a speech to the unit's employees several months later, Golub charged T.R.S. with lack of "vision," and characterized the failure to acquire "vision" as a "task undone." He slashed costs, much as he had done at I.D.S. And he cultivated a more down-to-earth style, popular with many employees, which included inviting them to sign up for small "lunches with Harvey" and throwing a family picnic.

Card membership continued to decline, but the decline didn't seem to trouble Golub. "Let it sink to its natural level," he said, and he maintained that how often consumers used their card was more important than how many cards were in force. But others were concerned that the card was losing its critical mass—a far more worrisome prospect than the much publicized "revolt" of merchants unwilling to accept the Amex card because of the higher percentage it charges merchants.

Golub's efforts to boost card spending were reflected in his first major marketing initiative—one that was closely watched by those who felt he lacked marketing experience. As his earlier foray with the Minneapolis agency showed, Golub was unimpressed by Ogilvy & Mather, which had been Amex's principal ad agency for nearly thirty years. In particular, he was weary of the "Membership has its privileges" campaign, which he deemed stale and too much of a "soft sell." He wanted something more aggressive, he said. Ogilvy executives rushed to respond, creating a campaign that deëmphasized impulse spending and focussed on more basic family needs. In November, though, Amex bluntly announced that it was dropping Ogilvy & Mather and moving its account, estimated at sixty million dollars a year, to Chiat / Day / Mojo, a younger, hipper, West Coast-based agency. The new campaign had two objectives: to reinforce the image of the American Express card as the one card to carry, and to boost spending. To attain those ends, the new slogan was

"The Card. The American Express Card." All the ads featured outsized, conceptual American Express cards. In one, an Easter Island sculpture appeared to have been resculpted as a giant Amex card. In another, an executive rushed to catch the Concorde, and the tail of the plane had become an American Express card. One of the points was that many Amex cards had no spending limit, so customers could charge high-cost fares like the Concorde's.

Some T.R.S. executives were appalled by the campaign, and a few openly objected to it. What had happened to the emphasis on family values and basics? Concordes and Easter Island, they thought, reeked of the eighties, and the imagery was confusing. Some Amex executives quietly kept the lines of communication open to Ogilvy. Members of the ad community, particularly in the trade press, heaped scorn on the campaign. But Amex stood staunchly behind it, defending it in the *Wall Street Journal* as "terrific" and "evolving very nicely."

Most members of the board knew little of Golub's activities other than glowing reports from Robinson, including one at the board meeting last February, where Robinson promised to name a successor. But on Sunday, May 10th, the Minneapolis *Star Tribune* ran a feature by Linda Mack under the headline "FOR SALE: DREAM HOUSE," with the subhead "Car Wash Just One of Many Extras in This $7 Million Home." The article, illustrated with photographs, concluded, "As with the moguls' mansions of old, this mix of architecture and money has already earned its legacy as a monument to art and ego."

Copies were soon circulating among board members. Not only were some of them displeased by the publicity and the values it represented but they were disturbed to learn that Golub himself had consented to the article. Moreover, it turned out that, for all practical purposes, American Express itself now owned the house. It hadn't sold, so Amex had had a relocation firm market it, with Amex—not Golub—bearing the risk of loss. The house still hasn't sold, despite a steep price reduction, to $3.9 million. Amex is also paying "carrying costs" on the house, amounting to six hundred and sixty thousand dollars a year.

Then, during the summer, about the time Robinson unveiled his choice of Golub as his successor, I.D.S. agreed to settle the age-discrimination suit rather than risk a trial. I.D.S. admitted none of the allegations and publicly emphasized the standard rationale in such cases—that it was settling only to avoid the expense and time of protracted litigation. But the terms of the settlement were favorable to the plaintiffs. I.D.S. agreed to pay them thirty-five million dollars. It also promised to take remedial measures, including an annual message to employees emphasizing the company's commitment to fair employment practices. The suit and the settlement were so sensitive that I.D.S. sought and obtained a gag order on all parties to the case.

The settlement had no material effect on I.D.S.'s earnings, which continued to be strong, but was nonetheless disturbing to some Amex directors, among them people who were themselves in their sixties and seventies. Despite the militant language of I.D.S. spokespersons, they

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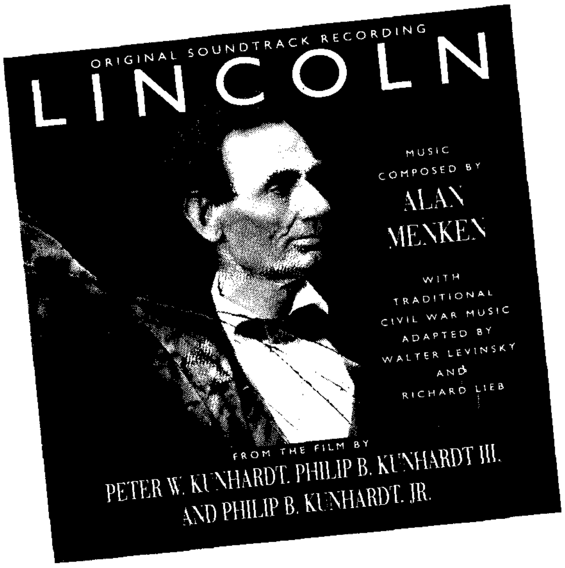
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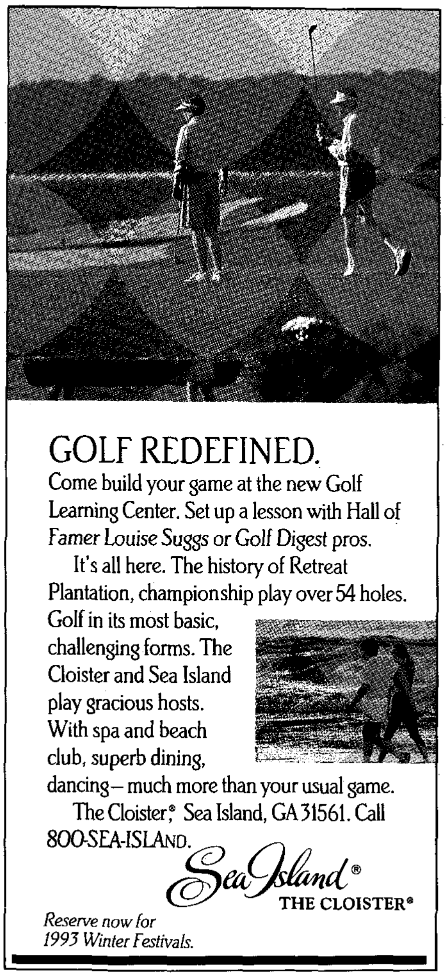

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believed that, whether or not the evidence supported a legal claim of age discrimination, it represented conduct that was reprehensible, and a serious breach of the decency that had historically characterized American Express's dealings with its employees. No loyal employee should ever be characterized as a “dinosaur.” And the irony that Amex had to pay thirty-five million dollars to settle a claim of discrimination wasn't lost on these directors when it was later alleged that Golub himself was being discriminated against by some of them.

WITH these events fresh in their minds, some directors headed into Amex's September board meeting at the St. Regis prepared for a showdown. The performance of American Express had continued to languish, and, for the third meeting in a row, the board got more bad news—in this case, yet another huge writeoff against earnings, even as costs of Golub's T.R.S. restructuring continued to mount.

Robinson began the pre-dinner meeting by raising the succession issue: “When I'm sixty, I'm no longer going to be here,” he said. Though he had always told friends that he planned to retire young, as Clark had before him, this was the first time he'd been so explicit. He reiterated his support for Golub as “the only person inside the company” capable of taking the helm—a pointed exclusion of Howard Clark, Jr. After discussing the company's progress and problems on various fronts, he withdrew from the room.

Despite the ongoing bad news, loyalty to Robinson had remained strong over the years. But his insistence on Golub as his successor was, for some directors, a last straw. They reasoned that if Robinson was allowed to remain as chairman for several years, and continue to groom Golub, Golub would be so deeply entrenched as to be irreplaceable. By then, some directors would presumably have resigned or retired—for instance, Rawleigh Warner, Jr., the former chairman of Mobil Corporation, who was seventy-one, and was a neighbor and friend of Clark's in Hobe Sound—and in all likelihood they would be replaced by Golub loyalists.

It was Warner who launched a full-scale attack on Robinson's tenure. In a lengthy presentation he cited the nasty surprises that the board had confronted in recent years. Since no one seemed able to articulate a vision of where the company was heading, he saw no end in sight. With that, Warner proposed that Robinson be ousted as chief executive right then and there, to be replaced by an interim executive committee of directors. While the precise membership of the committee wasn't disclosed, it was clear that Warner and Clark would be involved; William Bowen, a former president of Princeton, was also mentioned as a potential member. Warner wanted to announce the move the next day. It went without saying that such a plan precluded any possibility of Golub's succeeding Robinson.

Other directors were stunned, and some were angered by what appeared to be a carefully orchestrated coup. John Byrne, the chairman of Fund American, and David Culver, the former chairman of Alcan Aluminum, had clearly known what was coming. Robinson's supporter Drew Lewis, who had been kept in the dark, was enraged that some directors would go behind the backs of their fellow board members.

In the ensuing discussions, some directors rose to Robinson's defense, arguing that things were beginning to look better, and mentioning that the directors themselves had endorsed such ill-fated ventures as Optima. Robinson's and Golub's strengths and weaknesses were also discussed; in Golub's case, several directors raised questions about whether he had the character and the judgment to run the company. In the end, the board wasn't willing to go as far as Warner wanted, and when he realized he didn't have the votes he withdrew the proposal to replace Robinson with a committee. But he achieved one of his objectives: the board voted that a search for Robinson's successor would begin immediately, without regard for the leisurely timetable Robinson himself had proposed.

The discussion over, Warner and two other directors left to retrieve Robinson and break the news before he returned to the room. Later, at dinner, the still unflappable Robinson betrayed no emotion. “Let's keep the process going,” he said, and indicated that he would work with the board to facilitate his departure. The developments did cast a chill over the usual conviviality of board dinners, of course, and Robinson has since been described as bitter over his treatment, especially toward Warner and Clark.

As for Golub, the board neither embraced him nor vetoed him. Instead, the next day, it formed a search committee, which would include Robinson. It was agreed that the whole matter would be kept secret. (The secret held for three months, until Bill Saporito, of *Fortune*, broke the story in December.)

UNDER Robinson's coaching, Golub moved swiftly to try to shore up his board support. In October, with Golub conceding that the new ad campaign had been a failure, Chiat/Day/Mojo was fired, and the account was restored to Ogilvy. In a crucial presentation to the board in November, which was intended to define a vision for Travel Related Services, Golub and one of his top executives, Kenneth Chenault, unveiled a concept called "total spend"—a refinement of the strategy to increase use of the card rather than focus on card membership.

"Total spend" meant plunging more deeply into revolving credit, pouring more resources into Optima, and taking on the major banks. At the same time, in a move to placate traditionalists, Golub quietly ordered that a target of one million be set for an increase in card membership. These moves impressed some board members—the "total spend" concept in particular. Card membership has begun to rise, and average spending has soared (as it did for all major credit cards this past holiday season). International results, however—another subject of board concern—have continued to lag.

If anything, Robinson's rebuff by the board has only solidified his support for Golub. In return, some board members have been told (though not by Golub or Robinson) that Golub, if named as chief executive, will retain Robinson as non-executive chairman, with all the perks, respect, and prestige that such a position entails. Jonathan Linen—the No. 2 at T.R.S. and a longtime Amex executive, whose first job had been as Clark's assistant—assumed the role of emissary to anti-Golub holdouts like Clark. But neither these gestures nor Golub's financial achievements are likely to appease his opponents' concerns about his character, judgment, and vision. To Golub's supporters, talk of such subjective factors is thinly veiled anti-Semitism: Why should he be faulted for enjoying large and expensive houses when countless chief executives, many of them pillars of the establishment, have lived even more lavishly? Why shouldn't he be judged solely on performance—especially his sterling earnings record at I.D.S.?

The succession issue is to be the main item on the agenda at the next board meeting, on January 25th. If a nasty confrontation is to be avoided, a consensus will need to have been forged by then. The search committee has narrowed its quest to three outside candidates, but Golub remains a contender. Robinson has lately been insisting that, despite appearances, he hasn't lost control of the board and can muster the votes to push Golub through. Golub loyalists have been pressing him to do just that—calling an early special board meeting, if necessary. They are urging him to bring the issue of anti-Semitism into the open. But if Robinson can force Golub on a divided board he hasn't yet been willing to do so. "It isn't my style," he told one Golub partisan. Drew Lewis insists that although Robinson is "very positive on Harvey," he remains "open-minded" to an outsider.

Robinson must know that, even if an element of anti-Semitism has unavoidably entered the succession debate, it is not what American Express's future will turn on. Some of those who strenuously oppose Golub's ascension, including current and former employees of T.R.S., are Jewish themselves. And, of course, Golub's professional record is far from flawless. His own executive committee at T.R.S. is sharply divided over his suitability.

American Express, like other great American institutions caught in the vise of intensifying competition and technological change, needs someone who can reinvent the company, someone who can free it from the paralyzing debate over whether it should return to its roots or compete in the credit arena. Robinson, faced with what may be his last great decision as Amex's chairman, has the opportunity to leave the company in the hands of someone who has that vision, even if it differs from his own. He himself embarked on a grand plan to transform American Express from a travel-and-entertainment company into a full-range financial-services firm. That it failed shouldn't obscure the importance of having a vision to begin with. ♦

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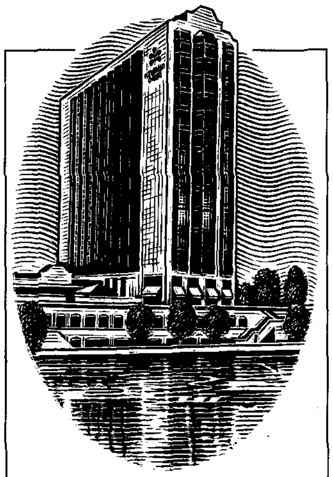

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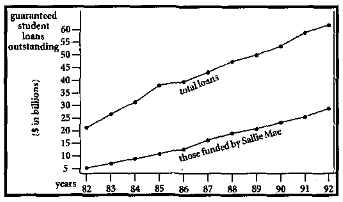

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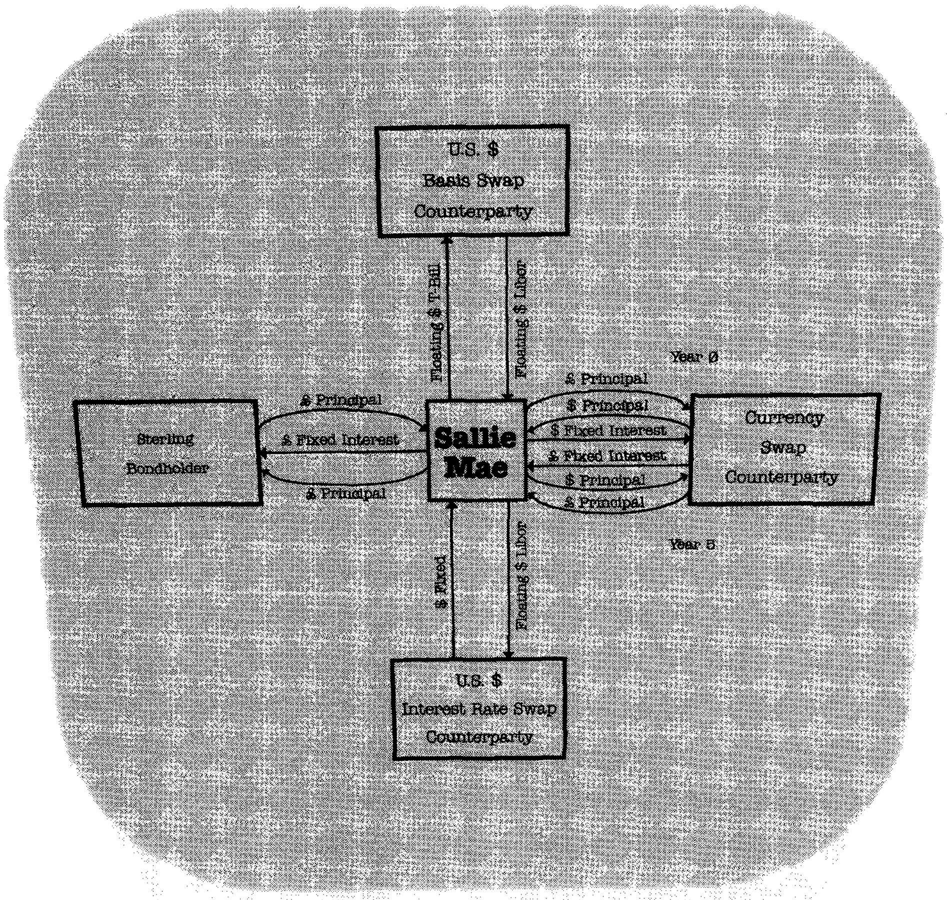
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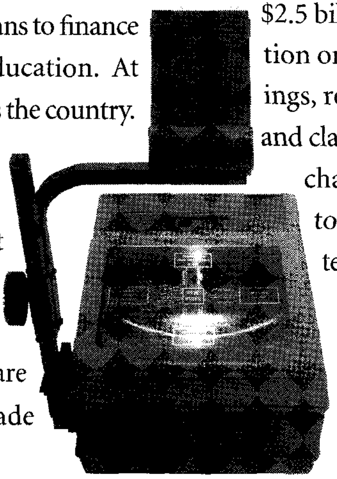

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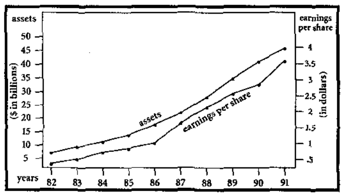

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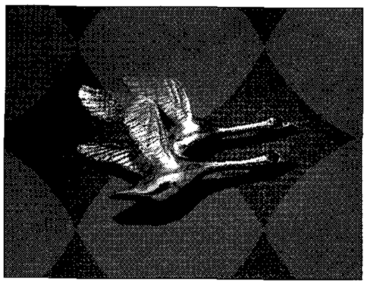

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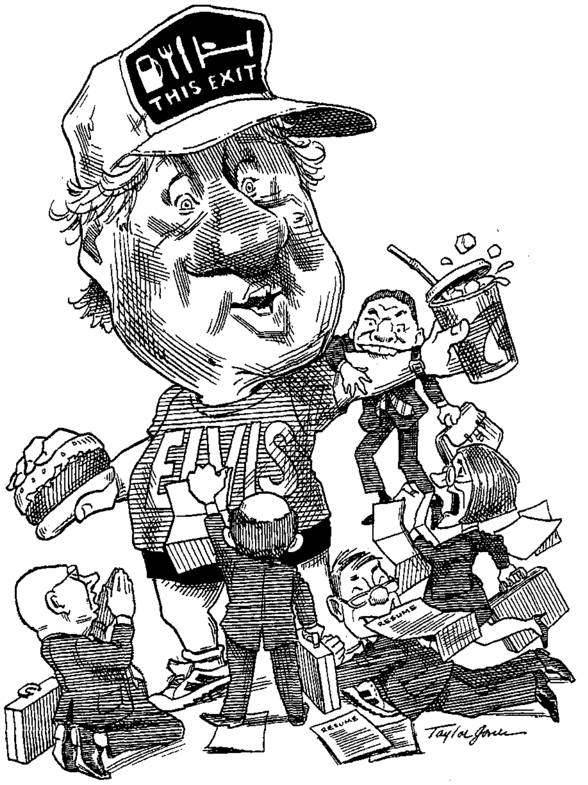

TAYLOR JONES

A WEEK after the election, a large, thin yellow-covered paperback entitled "Policy and Supporting Positions" was published by the Senate Committee on Governmental Affairs. In its two hundred and eleven pages of fine print, it lists every appointive job within the executive branch, complete with salary range, from the White House chief of staff to members of the board of governors of the Postal Service—all positions thrown open by the election. Though no best-seller list took note of it, "Policy and Supporting Positions" was undoubtedly the most avidly purchased book in Washington. Within days of its publication, the supply was virtually exhausted.

After November 3rd, the individual energies that collectively had been focussed on a Democratic win were immediately repossessed by their owners in frantic attempts to secure berths in a new Washington. The job seekers found themselves following their leader's path of glad-handing, crowd-pleasing, and policy-crunching. After basking in victory, they were plunged into a Darwinian jungle. Now they were competing not against partisan foes but against one another.

Bill Clinton's tireless ability to remember names, debts, and favors, along with an encyclopedia of policies, seemed a fair guide for survival. Getting the job was not simply a matter of professional distinction or connections. Many aspirants had unquestioned merit; many had impressive references. But the wilderness years had created a reserve army of the politically unemployed. One had to fight for the jobs, just as Clinton had fought for nomination and election.

Clinton's "promises," such as there were, were hardly gold certificates. More than one would-be Cabinet Secretary privately touted a gilded "promise" only to discover that it was worthless specie. Even those close to the President-elect, who travelled with him every day, worried about where they might ultimately wind up. "Bill Clinton has five thousand good friends, and many of the virtuous will not be rewarded," remarked one Friend of Bill, or F.O.B., who was stoically awaiting his own fate.

Résumés were flourishing everywhere: strangers sharing cabs quizzed each other aggressively about connections to anyone "on transition," and if a link was uncovered a résumé was proffered. Everything seemed possible, but nothing was happening. "The election was about jobs, but they don't have them yet," said a Capitol Hill staffer who was angling for one himself. Few were willing to say much about their plight to anyone but their most trusted friends, for one significant difference between Clinton's campaign and theirs was that he'd been free to conduct his openly, while those promoting themselves too obviously could find themselves in trouble. Depression seemed to hit at random, like a plague, but a loss of attention and appetite was not necessarily a sign that the seeker had lost his chance at a job. It was just a common response to panic.

Free-floating anxiety matched the amorphous quality of the moment: Who had influence? Overnight, a Byzantine bureaucracy sprang up to confront the scramblers, and threading through it was a test of skill. The transition team had a "cluster" group to parallel every department or agency of the federal government, some of the clusters involving dozens of people. But whether participation improved one's chances or might be considered a disqualification was a mystery. "I'm hoping, but I don't know," said one cluster leader, an F.O.B. who was still in the dark. Literally tens of thousands of résumés flowed into the Vermont Avenue headquarters of the transition team and were digested by a computer, most never to be seen again. Those accompanied by letters from obviously eminent figures whose names appeared on a secret list (Vernon Jordan, Tipper Gore) were moved into serious contention. A man little known in Washington was appointed to head the sub-Cabinet selection process, and suddenly seemed omnipotent: the soft-spoken former governor of South Carolina, Richard Riley. Did anyone know him, or anyone around him? Even if a route to Riley could be found, it might be only the beginning. New players with authority might unexpectedly enter the process in various departments. Who knew them? How could one make a case to them? In the meantime, the clusters and a "confirmation team" continued the grim reaping until they had gathered shortlists. Being on a shortlist meant reaching the most excruciating level of purgatory: the cusp between being and nothingness. The loss of control over one's future was total. Breathing stopped for days, a week, two weeks. Then one read in the newspaper that the sub-Cabinet search would continue long after the Inauguration. It was the sort of murderous atmosphere that had led to the assassination of James Garfield by a disgruntled job seeker.

WASHINGTON is living under a reign of terror because this is the only democracy in which there is a "transition"—a period of months between the burying of one government and the birth of another. Only in America is a defeated President not a dead duck but a lame duck, still quacking loudly. After George Bush lost, for example, he dispatched an army to Africa, and a fleet of planes to Iraq. The old soldier will fade away, but he retains full powers for nearly three months after being cashiered. Perhaps the most disastrous (or unmanageable) transition was Lincoln's: in the midst of it, the Southern states seceded. The nation's worst economic crisis peaked with a transition: from November of 1932 to March of 1933, the country drifted further downward into the Depression, yoked to the leaden Hoover, while it awaited Franklin D. Roosevelt. Now, half a century later, while symptoms of the decline that led to Bush's ouster become graver—the loss of manufacturing jobs continuing, the deficit rising dramatically—Clinton is prevented from making his entrance. During this extended period of unreality, he has assembled his team in the wings. To the public watching the staged press conferences at regular intervals, the transition may seem stately and ordered. Behind the scenes lies chaos. Yet behind this it is possible to discern power and intention.

The transition, according to Clinton's plan, was to be an almost utopian interlude. The day after the election, though, Clinton's campaign chairman, Mickey Kantor, presented him with an ultimatum: name him chairman of the transition and White House chief of staff. Clinton was physically spent. He had flown around the country non-stop, nearly sleepless for three days. Kantor, an attorney with the Los Angeles firm of Manatt, Phelps, Phillips & Kantor, had served on the board of the Legal Services Corporation with Hillary Clinton during the Carter years. He had been unfailingly loyal during the campaign, but as it progressed he had been shunted aside by the Gang of Four, led by the political strategist James Carville, who had assumed control, with Clinton's approval. (The other members were the communications chief, George Stephanopoulos; the media producer Mandy Grunwald; and the pollster Stanley Greenberg.) Kantor's post-election move was viewed by them as a coup attempt. Clinton rebuffed Kantor, not angrily but firmly. The President-elect would not yield his own power; rather, he would choose his Cabinet slowly, just as he had chosen his Vice-

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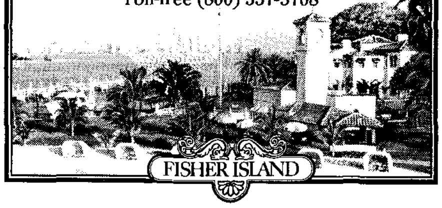

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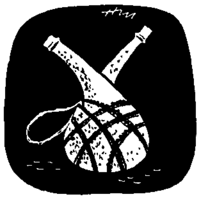
President—an act that had been decisive in transforming his campaign.

Months earlier, Kantor had set up the formal vehicle for the transition—the Clinton-Gore Presidential Transition Planning Foundation, with a board and a small office in downtown Little Rock. Kantor's overthrow left the transition headless. Clinton had hoped for a disciplined transition—as disciplined as the campaign—though his own style is loose. Partly, he balances his embracing personality with tight organization. After Kantor's departure, Clinton filled the vacated space with a man whom he had met through Kantor—Warren Christopher, who was the most senior partner in the Los Angeles law firm of O'Melveny & Myers and a former Deputy Secretary of State. It was Christopher who had been in charge of the Vice-Presidential choice, and the outcome had been more than Clinton hoped. Now his trust in Christopher was complete. From Clinton's point of view, Christopher gave the transition gravity. In temperament, Chris, as he is called, is Clinton's opposite: the ultimate corporate lawyer, by all accounts emotionally and physically inexpressive. "At meetings, Chris is the last to speak. You never know what he's thinking," someone close to Clinton said. "It's hard to know whether he thinks well of you. He never presumed anything, he never pushed. He was just there. And he doesn't seem to understand political favors"—another plus. A generation older than the President-elect, distinguished and steady, constantly encouraging and helpful, his demeanor conveying an image of selflessness, Christopher was just the father figure that Clinton might have wished for. With the sequence of Cabinet appointments determined so that the area of national security was left for next to last, Christopher was able to play a central role in the decision-making almost to the end, and it was therefore almost inevitable that he would be chosen Secretary of State. He had seemed to be the disinterested wise man, but he broke the classic rule that the one in charge of the transition should not have a vested interest in its results.



Christopher was to the transition what Carville had been to the campaign. The difference in types corresponded with the President-elect's metamorphosis from campaigner to executive-in-waiting: Clinton's readiness to throw himself with gusto into any scene at any time was reflected in Carville's histrionics; Clinton's concern with legitimacy and process was reflected in Christopher's sobriety. But both Carville and Christopher, in their separate ways, stood for stability and organization. With victory, the campaign team dispersed or was reassigned. Of the Gang of Four, only Stephanopoulos remained within Clinton's immediate circle, and even he did not rise to the innermost circle of the transition: he was not included in the Cabinet deliberations. Those in Clinton's new privy council were Christopher, Vice-President-elect Al Gore, Bruce Lindsey (Clinton's former law partner and constant companion, who is utterly loyal to him and has no agenda of his own), and Hillary Clinton.

For Hillary Clinton, the bake sale was over. Along with Christopher, she was the chief beneficiary of the transition. No one else has her access to the President-elect, but, unlike Christopher, she was not chosen for the specific role of adviser. The role of First Lady was now as anachronistic as Marilyn Quayle's Convention polemic on women's "essential nature," but it was not simply because of Hillary's nature that the position seemed magnified and undefined: Bill's receptive character and his need for collaboration underwrite her influence. He is far more inviting of her ideas than even Franklin was of Eleanor's. The President-elect's unabashed reliance on her will invariably cause her influence to eclipse that of others. In the campaign, she was more influential than Carville, and in the transition she was more influential than Christopher, though she didn't appear on any flow chart. Current speculation that Mrs. Clinton may represent the liberal part of the Democratic coalition mistakes the Clintons' marriage for an arrangement. And trying to see future ideological cleavages in the Administration as reflections of strains between the Clintons misunderstands their basic political agreement. In fact, it seems to betray ignorance of the existence of egalitarian marriage.

"Hillary's role is far more consistent and bigger than it was in the past," someone who has been close to the Clintons for years told me recently. "Bill doesn't have many people around him with whom he has had longtime trusting relationships, and the more you pull others out of the mix, the bigger the part she plays. She's good and he knows it. She used to spend time on her law practice, but now it doesn't exist. And Christopher and Riley aren't in Little Rock. They're not standing there." Given Clinton's penchant for listening to those around him, Hillary's influence is inevitable and constant. Not only is Hillary married to Bill Clinton; she is the one who is most like him in understanding the union of politics and policy, and how to use one to advance the other. Hillary is Bill's Bobby Kennedy, his James Baker. Their political educations are inextricably intertwined. She has been there as an activist since the McGovern campaign in Texas. In Arkansas, where she worked for education reform and was appointed to the Southern Governors Association Task Force on infant mortality, she was more prominent in promoting public policy than she has been as a prospective First Lady. Since the election, the only person in Clinton's immediate circle who could conceivably match her knowledge of policy and politics is Gore, and he has been married to Clinton only since July. Alone, Bill and Hillary spend much of their time poring over policy papers and résumés together. Weathering the stress of the campaign, in which their marriage in all its aspects became a controversial issue, has brought them "closer than ever," one of their old friends from Arkansas told me.

THROUGH the dust storm of the transition it is possible to see some semblance of structure—most clearly the emerging powers of Warren Christopher and Hillary Clinton. But the tumult of the Cabinet struggles obscures much of the horizon. On one level, the Cabinet selections can be interpreted as the fulfillment of coalitional functions. Along these obvious political lines, the economics team created a traditional Democratic financial-political nexus from Texas to Wall Street—from Secretary of the Treasury-designate Lloyd Bentsen (who served as a Lyndon Johnson figure for Michael Dukakis in 1988) to the Economic Security Council chief, Robert Rubin, an arbitrageur from Goldman, Sachs.

But there were also knights and queens being moved in a chess game of gender and ethnicity. At a Saturday dinner party, former Senator Tim Wirth, of Colorado, was confident that his appointment as the Secretary of Energy would be announced the following week; it had, after all, been promised him. But something mysterious happened. (Was his *Times Magazine* piece, "Diary of a Dropout," excoriating the profane institution of the Senate, which so alienated his colleagues, a factor? A number of inquiring senators wanted to know.) So, contrary to dinner-party predictions, Wirth did not find himself standing next to Clinton in Little Rock but, instead, was checkmated by a Minneapolis utility executive, a black woman named Hazel O'Leary. (Wirth, in compensation, was offered a job as an Under-Secretary of State, which he mulled over.)

Then a strange series of fast moves rearranged the board. It began with the arrival in Little Rock of former Arizona Governor Bruce Babbitt, who was presumably to be announced as the choice for United States Trade Representative. Back in Washington, the Hispanic caucus in the House of Representatives was lobbying hard for one of its members, Bill Richardson, claiming that Hispanics were being denied, though Henry Cisneros, the former mayor of San Antonio, had already been named the Secretary of Housing and Urban Development. As Richardson's name was put forward for Secretary of the Interior, environmental groups were aroused to oppose him, because of his uneven record. If Richardson had to be cancelled, the reasoning in the Clinton camp went, another Hispanic had to be found. Hence Federico Peña, a former mayor of Denver, surfaced. According to the political logic, he could be the Secretary of Transportation. And so it was to be: Babbitt became Secretary of the Interior; Mickey Kantor, his internal reputation revived by his successful management of the economic summit, was promoted, with Christopher's assistance, to United States Trade Representative; and Peña got Transportation.

The only problem was that Transportation had been promised to Bill Daley, a banker and, more important, a brother of Mayor Richard M. Daley of Chicago. The Daley boys, sons of the fabled mayor, were longtime Clinton supporters, and had been crucial in his victory in the Illinois primary. They were strict believers in the ancient codes of politics. (Reward your friends; we don't take nobody nobody sent; don't get mad, get even.) And they were very unhappy. "I don't get it. I don't get it," a member of Clinton's entourage who was close to the Daleys said. For all the care devoted to balance in the new Administration, Clinton's Cabinet had no member from Illinois, Michigan, Ohio, or Pennsylvania—all major industrial states that had voted for him. Moreover, with the exception of Mike Espy, the first black congressman from Mississippi since Reconstruction, who was named Secretary of Agriculture, there was not a single notable politician in the Cabinet who had been a prominent supporter—a most peculiar lapse for Clinton the politician.

Even during the limbo of the transition, in which his powers were unchallenged by Congress, the judiciary, or the Fourth Estate, Clinton could not escape the whirling centrifugal force of identity politics, which relentlessly tore the Democratic Party into its raw constituencies. When women's groups criticized him for failing to appoint enough women, he

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angrily lashed out at "bean counters." This outburst recalled his reproach of Sister Souljah, which had allowed him to finesse identity politics during the campaign. Nonetheless, it was announced within days that the Attorney General would be female. Brooksley Born, a Washington lawyer, had been "promised" the post, and, bedazzled by the prospect, she was telling her acquaintances in town that she had it. But once again the promise mysteriously evaporated. The new A.G. was to be Zoë Baird, a lawyer with broader experience, including a stint at O'Melveny & Myers. She had been slated for the job of White House legal counsel. "I think she was totally surprised," a transition official said.

Clinton's inconsistent allegiance to commitments personal and political (discovered by Wirth and Daley, among others) may be seen as problematic. But as these small dramas unfolded he was developing a larger context for his decisions as President. The transition, though incomprehensible to most, was inexorably pointed toward a final goal: Clinton's idea of the Presidency. This endeavor was not abstract but consisted of moves that were detailed and practical. It animates both the structure of his Administration and the expectations he has of its members.

The Clinton Presidency is intended as a commentary on and a retort to the last sixteen years. Bush, of course, represents to Clinton a President who almost entirely neglected domestic policy. Reagan is admired for his control of the policy agenda (if not for its substance) and his control of sub-Cabinet appointments, but he is also seen as a passive executive who allowed himself to be controlled by manipulative chiefs of staff. The principal counter-model, however, is the Carter Presidency, which misfired within months of Jimmy Carter's taking office. Carter would not work through the establishment in Washington, but he created no alternative: his Administration was an anti-politics of diminishing power. He alienated Congress, and could not focus on a dominant program. Carter had a romantic notion of collegial Cabinet government, but he could never realize it, because this is not a parliamentary regime. His Cabinet Secretaries were left to roam as independent operators, often at cross-purposes with the White House. When Cabinet government inevitably failed, he had nothing to offer as a replacement. Carter found coherence nowhere. He was left in the end with anti-government rhetoric that was easily appropriated and heightened by the Republican who beat him. For the next Democratic President the Carter disaster has to be cautionary.

The critical document of the Clinton transition is a memo, "Transition Workplan for Reviewing the Staffing and Organization of the White House and Executive Office of the President," written at the direction of Harrison Wellford, a Washington attorney who was a Carter budget official. It is based on extensive study of the executive branch since 1974 but focusses mainly on Carter's failures. The memo urges that a "political perspective" be brought to bear on "all policy-making and decision-making." The reason: "Carter officials believe the failure to connect policy-making with politics was the greatest flaw of the administration." It also urges the enforcement of "clear priorities among Presidential initiatives." The weak center in the White House, the document goes on, was "a serious mistake, resulting in a lack of cohesion and coördination and contributing to Carter's poor public image." The Cabinet government that Carter attempted to adopt is an approach that the new President should "avoid."

d. ehrenberg

Clinton approved all the Wellford memo's recommendations, which would centralize power in the White House. The chief of staff would be an "honest broker . . . the President's confidant and fall guy." The oldest F.O.B., Thomas (Mack) McLarty, who is a Little Rock natural-gas executive and went to kindergarten with Clinton, was chosen. Clinton was his only agenda. McLarty would help coördinate the council system that, in turn, would coördinate the Cabinet. There would be no wildcatting Secretaries. In addition to the National Security Council and the Domestic Policy Council, Clinton has created his Economic Security Council. "Cabinet members are strongly admonished not to end-run that system," a transition official said. Already, the process is beginning to operate. For almost all the Cabinet officials, this will be their first experience with Presidential government. To them, it may seem not controlling but normal.

Other centralizing functions are being set in place: Under Carter, the Cabinet Secretaries were allowed to appoint their sub-Cabinets without prior White House approval. Under Clinton, all sub-Cabinet choices must be negotiated with the White House. Meanwhile, the congressional liaisons and public-affairs officials in the departments and agencies will not be in the service of their fiefdoms alone. Rather, in contrast to the Carter system, they will be coördinated by the White House.

Of all the atmospherics of the transition, the one that made the greatest impression on the public was the economic summit—a case of vague intention turned to political advantage. It was announced by Vernon Jordan on "Meet the Press" without having been fully approved by the transition team. Nobody had a clear idea of what it would be like. A potential public-relations catastrophe loomed. But the affair was to the transition what the bus trips were to the campaign. Clinton staged the summit as a kind of doctoral orals exam in which the professors sought to please the student. Ideology was never discussed at the event, but the event was nonetheless intensely ideological. Only pragmatic solutions involving the use of government were advanced. Affirmative government was assumed; it was not a subject of controversy. The belief that things would simply improve by the automatic operation of the market—the prevailing dogma of the nineteen-eighties—was so thoroughly discredited that it was not raised. While shunting the conservative tenets aside, Clinton advanced others through inclusion and coöptation. For those who remembered Carter's so-called malaise summit, in July of 1979, Clinton's economic summit was its ideal opposite. Like Clinton, Carter had summoned thinkers to advise him, but the feckless effort had made him appear uncertain, indecisive, weak. For more than a decade, it seemed that the Democratic Party was beached at Carter's summit. Clinton unstuck it.

Carter may provide the anti-model for a Clinton White House, but Clinton's approach is not without precedent. The problem of a vastly enlarged executive branch requiring integration by the President was studied by Richard Nixon after his 1972 landslide. In January of 1973, he announced the creation of a "super-Cabinet," with five senior assistants to be put in charge of coördination. (Within the Nixon White House, this was known as the five-testicle solution, in the spirit of Charles Colson's dictum "When you have them by the balls, their hearts and minds will follow.") Watergate, of course, consumed the Nixon Administration, so Nixon's plans were never put into effect. Everything attached to him acquired a sinister air. Gerald Ford attempted to rid the White House of it by making a show of instituting Cabinet government, and so paved the way for the earnest Carter.

With Clinton, a different operational theory is in place, but the task of creating a whole new reality in Washington and the country has scarcely begun. The exhausting campaign and the psychologically draining transition can now be seen as preludes. "The people really running the campaign always thought they would carry on the boiler-room discipline into the transition," a transition official said. Instead, the control broke down almost at once, with Kantor's failed coup, and as the coming of Christopher led to a new order. The political team at the center of the campaign spun off. Even those still in Clinton's orbit were in purgatory, waiting until the last moment before the Inauguration to assume their places. Christopher, for his part, amassed vast potential power but lacked the grand purposes to fill it. The man of process, in any case, was off to his line position at the head of the State Department. And how would he function under the purview of the National Security Council, headed by Anthony Lake, a man with ideas? Hillary Clinton, unlike Christopher, has purposes that exceed her formal power, which is merely decorative. She must filter everything through her alliance with the President-elect.

Meanwhile, the "honest broker" chief of staff, Mack McLarty, prepared to vacate Little Rock for Washington, a city with which he is largely unfamiliar, just as he is unfamiliar with the factional nuances of the Democratic Party and the federal government. Will the Arkansan be like Carter's provincial Georgians, or will he master the capital? The editorial criticism that Clinton began to face during the transition was not, however, that he was beginning to resemble Carter. It was that he and his team were too much the insiders, too heavily compromised by connections to the lobbyists' world of K Street. But wasn't it likely that a lawyer-lobbyist, such as Secretary of Commerce Ron Brown—formerly of Patton, Boggs & Blow, and the erstwhile chairman of the Democratic National Committee—would use his past ties to advance Clinton's goals?

"All this, to some degree, begins to break down after six to nine months," a transition official said about the operational plan. Cabinet members become captured by their bureaucracies, establish presences in the press, and open conflicts with one another in the eternal battle for primacy of place. Clinton has been advised that he has a "window"—a window that Carter walked past unknowingly. Clinton's plan demands the fusion of policy and politics; a strong Presidency requires large purposes. If the central force is not centripetal, it will be centrifugal, and Clinton's power will be pulled from him. Not since Lyndon Johnson has a President had such a consistent view of affirmative government. Clinton must succeed in Washington, the tainted capital, on its terms if he is to succeed nationally. So he is wiring the town. But if his operational theory cannot contain the conflicts among personalities and departments the tensions will flow upward to the Oval Office. If the executive must make all the decisions, stamina is not enough. Carter, too, worked long hours, finding ways to gain time by fostering needless complications. If managerialism substitutes for politics, a President will always be overwhelmed. Redoubling his efforts will only compound the mounting crisis—as the two engineers in the White House, Hoover and Carter, have proved. Clinton's ultimate promise, however, is the opposite: that he can make policy work through the genius of politics.

Now the artificial vacuum of the transition comes to an end. A government has been formed without the action that brings it to life. The main actors have been allotted parts but not a script. Nobody is onstage. Yet a roar can be heard. "The flight attendants haven't shut the overhead bins and we're taking off," one appointee said.

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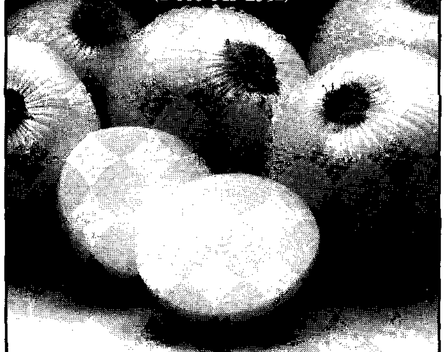

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Al Sharpton says he has rediscovered the legacy of Martin Luther King, Jr.—and with a powerful performance in New York's U.S. Senate primary, he seemed to sure of his new direction. But will he stick to the high road?

BY JIM SLEEPER

LATE in the afternoon of January 12, 1991, the Reverend Alfred C. Sharpton, Jr., thirty-six years old, awoke in a recovery room at Coney Island Hospital. Earlier that day, he had been stabbed in the chest. As he opened his eyes, he saw hovering over him Mayor David Dinkins, Deputy Mayors Bill Lynch and Milton Mollen, and Police Commissioner Lee Brown, all in surgical masks.

"What—did I die and go to Hell?" Sharpton asked.

Dinkins reassured him. A kitchen knife with a five-inch blade, wielded by a distraught white man, had narrowly missed his heart and vital arteries; doctors had drained blood from his chest cavity and declared his condition stable. Sharpton remembers turning to Lynch, a veteran activist in Brooklyn's black community, and, "without knowing why," hearing himself say, "Tell Jesse to call me."

That spontaneous request, Sharpton now says, was a moment of clarity in a search for "new directions." He adds, "That's when I realized what house I came out of—Martin Luther King's house, Jesse Jackson's house."

Early that afternoon, Sharpton had gone to Bensonhurst, a predominantly Italian-American neighborhood in Brooklyn, to Public School 205. More than two hundred and fifty police officers ringed the school playground, where some two hundred of Sharpton's followers had assembled for the latest in a series of marches to protest a white mob's killing of a black sixteen-year-old, Yusuf Hawkins, who, on August 23, 1989, had come into the neighborhood with three friends to look at a used car advertised in a newspaper. Sharpton had calculated the marches to provoke ugliness from whites, and some had rewarded him by screaming obscenities and brandishing watermelons. Less than a month after the killing, the marches had helped topple Mayor Edward Koch, as voters in the Democratic primary chose Manhattan Borough President David Dinkins, who had offered himself as a healer of racial antagonisms. The marches had sustained an atmosphere of crisis, and by May of 1990, just before one of the defendants, Joseph Fama, was convicted of second-degree murder, Sharpton was warning that if the verdicts were "less than murder" they would be "lighting a match to the end of a powder keg and telling us to burn the town down." He said he was "not calling for mindless violence," but he added, "Don't blame me. As a social weatherman, I'm telling you that the clouds of violence are over New York City." In June, however, after meeting with Bensonhurst community leaders, he suspended his marches. On January 11th, two other defendants, who had been charged with murder but convicted only of riot and weapon-possession charges, were given light sentences. So Sharpton was back at P.S. 205.

"I am very sticky at marches," Sharpton says. "I stay in the car and give instructions—'Set this up, set that up'—and then I'm the last one to get out of the car. We were in the 'frozen zone' "—the cordoned-off playground—"but I saw that the front line was not where it was supposed to be. I jumped out and said to Carl"—his aide Carl Redding—" 'I told you I want them five abreast.' Suddenly some guy ran up, with his face all contorted, and hit me. 'This guy punched me!' I yelled, and Carl and some others tackled him. Then I saw the knife sticking out of my chest. 'He stabbed me!' I yelled, and on a reflex I grabbed the knife and pulled it out."

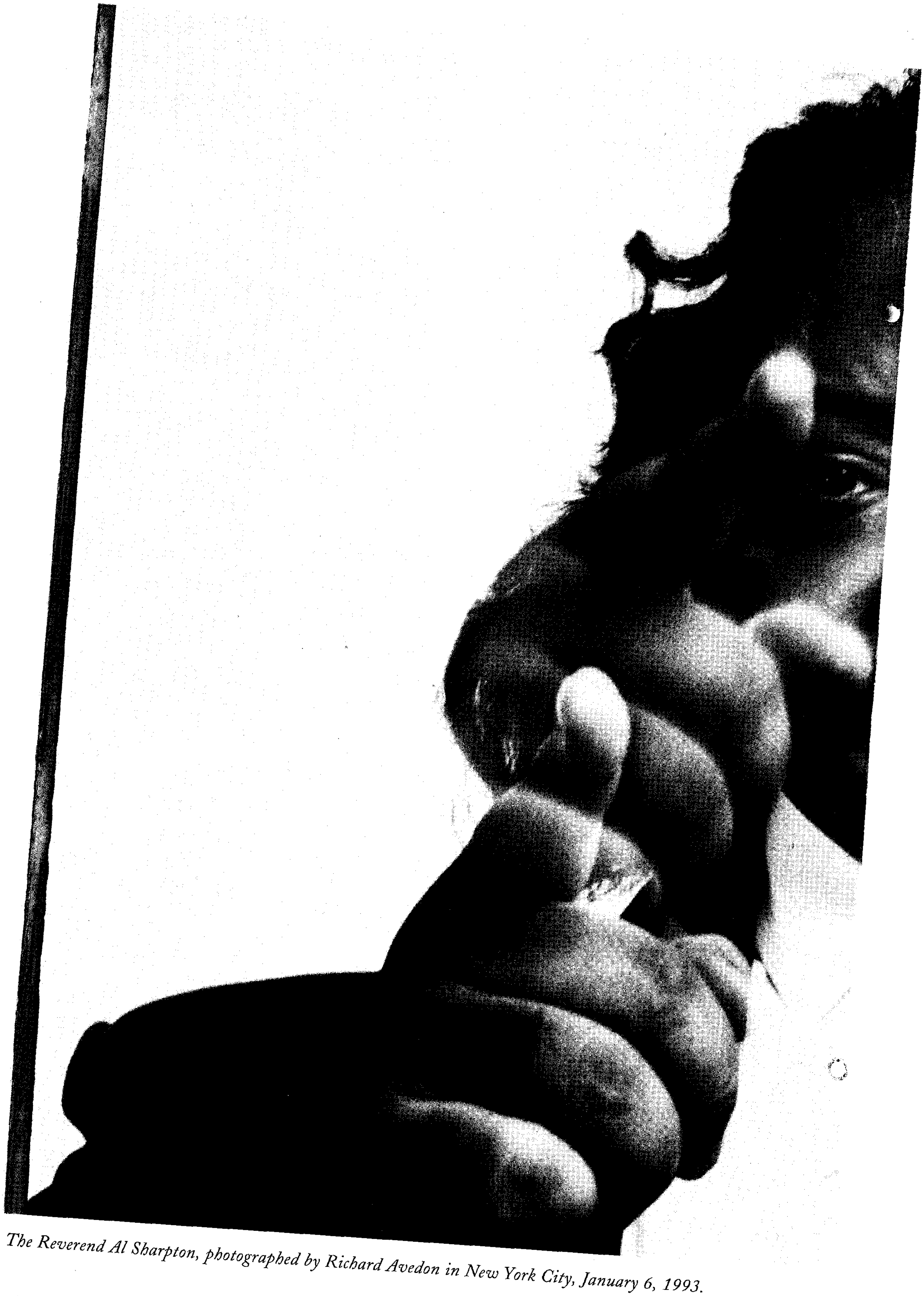
When, on another reflex, Sharpton asked to have Jesse Jackson call him in the hospital, the two hadn't spoken for months. "We'd had a falling-out after Yusuf's funeral and after I had criticized him for getting too close to the Democratic Party," Sharpton says. "Early the next morning, Jesse walked in. It really, really touched me."

After talking with Jackson, Sharpton issued a statement. (His wife, Kathy Jordan, read it to the press.) It urged his associates—including Alton Maddox, Jr., an attorney, and Yusuf Hawkins' father, Moses Stewart—who were planning to march again in Bensonhurst that day to do so peacefully. Sharpton spoke to reporters gathered at his bedside: "I do not seek martyrdom or pain. I don't want revenge, either. My revenge will be seeing a black kid and a white kid get the same kind of justice in court. Maybe people don't understand that about me. I don't want the system destroyed. I'm not for that. I want the system to work." (Fourteen months later, he went to court to seek leniency for his assailant, Michael Riccardi, calling him "a victim of racial tensions created by media hype.")

Dinkins telephoned the hospital daily to monitor Sharpton's recovery. Then Jackson and his wife invited Sharpton and his wife to join them on a five-day vacation in Las Vegas, and the two couples discussed Sharpton's prospects. "I told Alfred to speak above his pain, to take the high road and stay there," Jackson says.

A few months later, at Jackson's prompting, Sharpton met Cornel West, a professor of religion at Princeton University. West, only a year older than Sharpton, is prominent in academic circles as an interpreter of American philosophical pragmatism. To socialists, black activists, and other progressives, he is known as an exhortatory speaker for social justice and a builder of bridges among races and among black church people, secular militants, Afrocentrists, and integrationists.

The two of them—the professor, lean

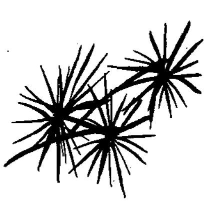


The Reverend Al Sharpton, photographed by Richard Avedon in New York City, January 6, 1993.

and intense, and the street preacher, plump and brassy—began talking at breakfast, at Sylvia’s restaurant, in Harlem, and kept going for seven hours, as Sharpton made his rounds all over town. “Cornel felt I was taking cheap shots,” Sharpton recalls. “He said, ‘Farrakhan comes out of Elijah Muhammad’s house, Sonny Carson comes out of the black-nationalist house, and you come out of Martin Luther King’s house. But you get in a circle with them and compromise in ways they wouldn’t, because they respect their traditions. What has happened to Martin’s house? You’ve let people burn it down. You need to uphold it by bringing people together.’ ”

West said recently, “I talked with Brother Sharpton about the black Christian role in the struggle, and about how you can’t be naïve about racism, but you can’t foreclose alliances with whites, either. You can’t get off the tightrope. He was for real—open, very serious. He was concerned about not losing his organic links to the black community. We talked about how Malcolm X got stuck for a while but was willing to grow, and about the tests you have to meet to be a progressive populist across lines of race, gender, and sexual orientation. Both of us think James Brown”—the singer—“is one of the greats, one of those leaders with enough security to be humble. It’s an open question if Al has that. He has the courage and the talent. Does he have the perseverance, the humility? Or will he fall back into opportunistic practices?”

Sharpton claims that his encounter with West “really changed” him. “It made me go back and read some things Cornel had sent me”: a book of West’s, “Prophetic Fragments,” which includes essays about religious and social leadership; the journalist William Greider’s “Who Will Tell the People,” a populist manifesto about the corruption of the political process; and the theologian Paul Tillich’s book “Love, Power and Justice.” Sharpton says, “It hit me—you can really die for this stuff, and if you’re gonna die, at least be well defined in what you were doing and what made it worthwhile.”



If Sharpton was not well defined in his own mind, he was clearly defined in the minds of most New Yorkers. Since early 1987, when he first led protests in the Queens neighborhood of Howard Beach—where a group of white youths had attacked three black men and chased one of them, Michael Griffith, to his death on a busy parkway—Sharpton had been all over the metropolitan area, with reporters close behind. Wherever blacks had been victims of racial violence—or said that they had been—Sharpton and two attorneys, Maddox and C. Vernon Mason, would investigate the charges and sometimes emerge as “advisers,” counselling noncoöperation with local police, prosecutors, and judges, controlling access by the press, and imputing racist cover-ups. Because the aggrieved refused to tell precisely what had happened to them, the criminal-justice system was paralyzed, and that lent credence to the cover-up idea, drawing more demonstrators to hear Sharpton and company denounce the authorities, often in lurid, vicious language.

Sharpton claimed to be building a new civil-rights movement with this strategy. But often he was manipulating the emblems of the civil-rights movement—its church rallies, marches, and magnificent demonstrations of civil disobedience—to advance his own ad-hoc conspiracy theories, vilify innocent whites, and intimidate blacks who disagreed with him. Even critics of the criminal-justice system came to see Sharpton as a practitioner of the big lie.

For Sharpton the publicity-hound and demagogue, however, the strategy was a big success. As he led his supporters in their chant—“No justice, no peace!”—and blew kisses to hecklers, he was part street radical, part pop star, and part moral witness. (He made a specialty of crashing others’ demonstrations, with a quotable “spin” on the controversy at hand.) Five feet ten, nearly three hundred pounds, wearing a nylon jogging suit and a Martin Luther King, Jr., medallion, he would swagger into a crowd or courtroom, his large face set in a pout of outraged determination. Quickly, deftly, he would focus whatever tension he had created or happened upon, hurling racially charged analogies like thunderbolts.

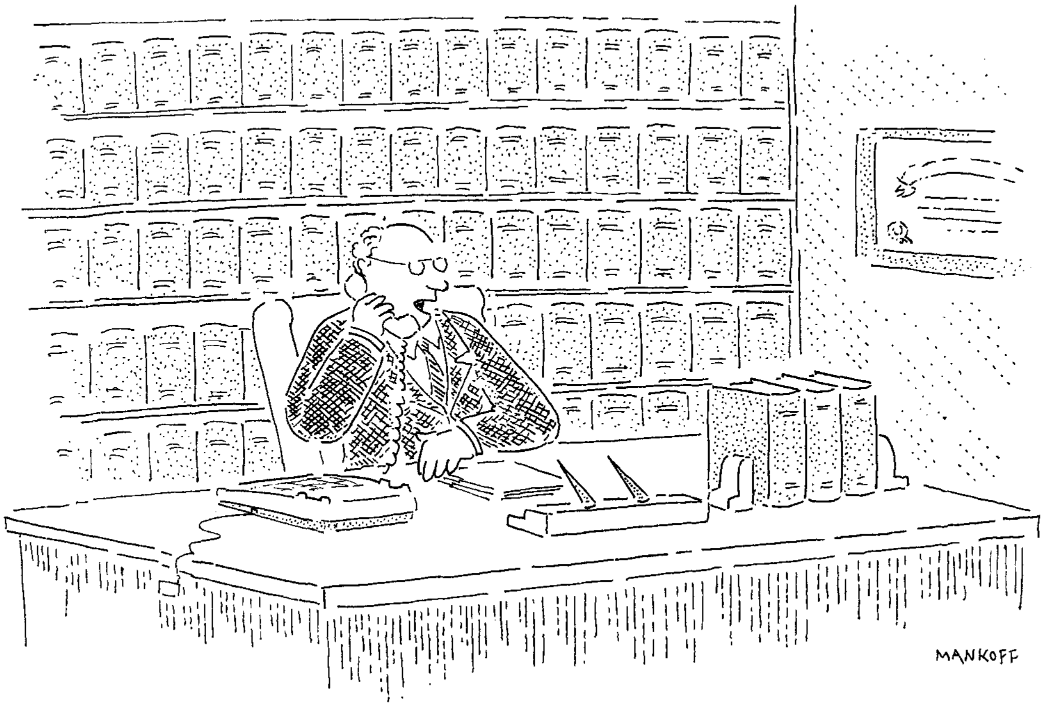
The “white press,” for example, had printed the name of fifteen-year-old Tawana Brawley but protected the privacy of a white woman raped in Central Park—and never mind that Sharpton and the lawyers had called press conferences to present Tawana Brawley’s story of rape. To push his point, Sharpton brought her to the Central Park trial to shake hands with two of the defendants, who had been part of a group of black and Hispanic youths he called victims of a courtroom “lynching.”

New York City has two million blacks, and polls taken during this period showed little support among them for Sharpton’s style of leadership. But by dramatizing the indifference with which the courts often handled genuine racist violence against black victims, such as Hawkins and Griffith, Sharpton tapped into rage, and much of the city’s black media was carried beyond the reach of rational debate—sometimes to the point of dismissing rational debate as a tool of smooth racists and their Toms. Sharpton himself never claimed that blacks’ history of oppression in America exempted them from transracial legal standards of truth-telling. But his tactics, by equating dubious charges of racism with genuine cases of racial violence, strengthened notions about a separate black reality, unknowable to whites and subversive of the fragile bases for interracial dialogue.

All this was a lot of Al Sharpton for a few conversations with Jesse Jackson and Cornel West to redefine. Yet in September of 1992, less than two years after his epiphany in the hospital, Sharpton ran in the Democratic primary for the United States Senate, with a mere sixty thousand dollars, and carried sixty-seven per cent of the black vote and fourteen per cent of the total vote. He edged out one of his three white opponents, City Comptroller Elizabeth Holtzman, and held a portion of power when the winner, State Attorney General Robert Abrams, went into the general election against Senator Alfonse D’Amato. Politicians and journalists proclaimed a “new” and more “statesmanlike” Sharpton; Governor Mario Cuomo called him the “classiest” candidate in the primary, “the real winner.”

In confessionals to newspaper editorial boards during his Senate campaign, Sharpton explained himself as a ghetto youth who had fought his way upward. His early childhood, though, was not particularly segregated or poor; and his growth was not so much a fight upward as a series of precocious achievements and dreadful disillusionments under the influence of several remarkable mentors.

His father, Alfred C. Sharpton, Sr., from Wabasso, Florida, was the manager of a small silverware factory in Brooklyn when, in 1950, he married Ada Richards, a seamstress from Eufaula, Alabama. A year later, they had a daughter, Sheryl, and bought a two-family row house on Logan Street, in Brooklyn's East New York section, which was then racially mixed. Alfred, Jr., was born at Kings County Hospital on October 3, 1954. His father, remembered by neighbors as a sociable man uninterested in politics, soon owned a contracting company and fifteen rental properties in the borough, and in 1959 the family moved to a spacious, freestanding gray stucco house with two sun porches, at the corner of two broad, tree-lined streets in Hollis, Queens, a neighborhood that was opening up to middle-class blacks. Of East New York, Alfred, Jr., recalls eating linguine with the Italian-American family next door; of Hollis, "no racial hostility," and a Jewish teacher at P.S. 134 who talked with him about the emerging civil-rights movement.



"Bad news, good news, sweetheart—the court rejected your appeal, but the networks are fighting to option it."

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The Sharptons still went to church in Brooklyn—to the Washington Temple Church of God in Christ, a Pentecostal congregation. The pastor was Bishop Frederick Douglass Washington, a national leader of the church and a Republican in the tradition of blacks who had never left the party of Lincoln. Young Alfred had been lining up his sister Sheryl's dolls and "preaching," wearing his mother's bathrobe for a vestment; at the age of four, he preached his first real sermon, to two thousand congregants at the Washington Temple. The Bishop, whose wife, Ernestine, was a gospel singer with record-industry connections, used to record some of his own sermons; in 1964, he produced a 45-r.p.m. record of one of Sharpton's. The record was sold to parishioners, distributed to other churches, and is occasionally still played on the gospel station WWRL. It preserves a nine-year-old's husky voice, tremulous with the Spirit and compelling in reproach: "God said, 'Judge him not,' for He understands me, and I know He understands you. He understands us even if we don't understand ourselves."

When Sharpton was ten, Washington ordained him in the Pentecostal ministry. Washington later told the *News*, "I don't understand him, just as his family doesn't understand him. But we see a fantastic future for him." So did other prominent blacks, among them Percy Sutton, a lawyer and businessman who later became Manhattan borough president and the owner of cable-TV franchises and radio stations. "He could talk about things adults would talk about," Sutton recalls. According to Sharpton, Washington introduced him to Martin Luther King, Jr., and Governor Nelson Rockefeller during their visits to the church, took him to the island of Jamaica to meet the widow of the black nationalist Marcus Garvey, and arranged for him to preach at several of Mahalia Jackson's concerts, including one at the 1964 World's Fair.

Around that time, the boy heard Representative Adam Clayton Powell, Jr., preach from his pulpit in Harlem's Abyssinian Baptist Church. "I thought I saw God," Sharpton says. Powell's worldly panache did not escape him, either; by his account, he talked his way into the pastor's study and was occasionally taken along on Powell's rides around town. (A few years later, at fourteen, Sharpton headed a youth committee to defend Powell, who was denied his seat in the House for misappropriating government money and other misconduct, and in 1972 Sharpton celebrated the defeat of one of Powell's congressional tormentors, Emanuel Celler, of Brooklyn, by a young insurgent named Elizabeth Holtzman.)

Sharpton's father often took him to the Apollo Theatre to hear James Brown, who lived in Queens. "He was probably the first black entertainer who made us kids feel like he really cared about us," Sharpton recalls. "He'd come outside his house and talk with us." By the time Sharpton was ten, his firmament was the civil-rights movement. He says of his own fame as a boy preacher, "It felt like the most natural thing in the world—the thing I was born to do."

LATE in 1964, Sharpton's family was going through a series of emotional upheavals that he remembers as "really traumatic." Finally, he says, "My father walked out, and that caused my mother to almost have a nervous breakdown." At child-support hearings, in 1965, Sharpton says, his father claimed he had no money because his business had failed, and then accused Ada of violating child-labor laws by making her son preach for a living—a charge that the boy strongly denied to the judge. "We lived in that house for six months without electricity or heat," Sharpton says, "and you resented him for taking everything away from you. My sister and I, because of all the violence, didn't want to see him again—it was almost a relief he was gone. I've never thought about reconciling. I think a lot of what motivates people on that depends on how the separation went down. When I was stabbed, he called me up for the first time in twenty-seven years. I didn't want to take the call, and we didn't say much."

A friend of Ada Sharpton's, Rosalie Wright, knew about the family's troubles, and found Ada and the children an apartment next to hers, in a five-story building on Lenox Road, in the East Flatbush section of Brooklyn. It was the kind of neighborhood that city planners delicately called "transitional." Its aging Jewish civil servants and shopkeepers were losing their liberalism to black crime and their homes to racist real-estate schemes. Two blocks north, you could look under the elevated tracks into the Brownsville ghetto. Rosalie Wright recalls that at the time Sharpton entered the local junior high school "they started busing in the Brownsville kids who were snatching these old Jews' pocketbooks," and that "one day, there was a race riot, and Alfred brought a white kid home to be safe—Ada called the boy's father to come care for him."

The family went on welfare; Ada found part-time work cleaning offices. Wright remembers that after Ada was mugged one night going to work, Alfred would walk her to the subway. "I always resented having to leave Hollis," Sharpton says. "But it also made me know there was another kind of life, so they couldn't tell me in Brooklyn that that was what you're supposed to live like, because I knew better."

He says he survived these times with Bishop Washington's help (at one point, Ada Sharpton tearfully declined the Bishop's offer to legally adopt the boy) and by thinking about his idols Adam Clayton Powell and James Brown. At twelve, he gravitated to the Reverend William Augustus Jones, Jr., of Bedford-Stuyvesant's Bethany Baptist Church. A physically imposing man with a resonant voice, Jones is the son and grandson of prominent Kentucky ministers and was one of the first black students to graduate from the University of Kentucky; he earned a doctorate at the Colgate Rochester Divinity School and served as president of the National Black Pastors' Conference. When Sharpton met him, Jones was the New York leader of Operation Breadbasket. In the Christian belief that "the earth is the Lord's," Breadbasket demanded that corporations direct capital and jobs to their black customers. Jones introduced Sharpton to Breadbasket's national director, a twenty-seven-year-old minister named Jesse Jackson. In 1969, Sharpton became the New York youth chairman. A 1970 news photograph shows Jones and Sharpton, then a high-school sophomore, debating a vice-president of A. & P. during an "occupation" of its corporate headquarters, in Manhattan.

"Had I not been adopted by Bill Jones," Sharpton says, "I'd have been another kid floundering around in some 'holiness' storefront church." Instead, he was learning the arts of community organizing and protest. His high school—Samuel J. Tilden, in Brooklyn—had been virtually all-white in 1960 and was now nearly fifty per cent black; in nearby Brownsville, an aggressive experiment in "community control" of the schools was prompting citywide strikes by the teachers' union. Tilden crackled with demonstrations. Sharpton was sometimes an instigator and sometimes the only black student whom teachers could count on to help forestall violence.

Elliot Salow, a teacher who often took Sharpton to a local diner to discuss politics, recalls, "Al was unusual in that he learned from those he opposed. He absorbed other people's positions. It accounts for his ability to respond so quickly in debate." Gertrude Cromwell, one of Tilden's few black teachers at the time, says, "What he is now is just a blown-up version of what he was then. He had the same swagger. He was all mouth, with that tooth chipped in front. You heard him before you saw him. He had a hearty laugh and a way of getting to people. He'd walk up and put his arms around the principal and say, 'Joseph Shapiro, how you doin' today?' He was provocative but not hostile."

Sharpton was fashioning a strategy for survival—"Say it loud, I'm black and

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FOOLISHLY HALVED, I SEE YOU

The white-green wheel of a sliced lime
after a day: so naturally dry,

and so protective of all its remaining
juice. This is the quick thought so sly
of the classic survivor. But you have survived

the living! the only in doubt,
for now, the only in danger.

Now the foolish attempt to—wait—not think
about the cut fruit. No, don't cry,

not yet, over its unspilled half-green
milk. It dries hard overnight. I
am you. The dying hasn't died

yet. In fact, is perhaps not dying,
although (you do too love him) he is in danger.

—Elizabeth Macklin

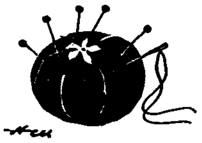
I'm proud" (as James Brown sang it) coupled with a need to reach whites. He was "a 'straight' in this age of super slicks," Marcia Ann Gillespie wrote in 1972, after interviewing him (at the suggestion of Jesse Jackson) for the black magazine *Essence*. The seventeen-year-old Sharpton told Gillespie, "I think it's very dangerous for us to replace white is right, with Black is right. It's time for us to start dealing with the basic fact that there are some Black people who are bad. . . . A cat who wants to know his heritage, where he came from and all that—that's good. But that's not the basis of liberation, because when you are really dealing with the principles of liberation, it's beyond race. . . . If I, for one minute, thought that Black people wanted to be free only to exploit somebody else, I would leave the struggle." Gillespie now remembers being "somewhat skeptical" of Sharpton. "But I loved his sense of urgency," she says. "He had an incredible, naïve intelligence, an intuitive sense about what people wanted and needed to hear."

In 1971, when Sharpton was sixteen, he watched in horror as William Jones and Jesse Jackson were torn apart by a dispute over Jackson's handling of the annual Black Expo, an offshoot of Operation Breadbasket. Jackson left to found his own organization, People United to Save Humanity. "I wanted to go with Jesse to PUSH," Sharpton says, "but I didn't want to get Bill Jones mad."

Jones: "I really wanted him to go to a college, then to seminary, to become fully credentialled." Sharpton: "In Brooklyn then, everyone was an activist. You belonged to antiwar, S.D.S., Panthers—to something. After it all died, I was still running around looking for the march." Jones: "I see a young man with rare endowments who got pulled in many conflicting directions."

Late in 1971, a group of Harlem-based investors, including Clarence Jones, who had been publisher of the *Amsterdam News*, invited Sharpton to start his own youth organization, with their help. The National Youth Movement was incorporated (by the leader of Harlem's Carver Democratic Club, David Dinkins) for three thousand dollars, paid off through its first fund-raising dinner, honoring Representative Shirley Chisholm, of Brooklyn, the first black woman elected to Congress. Percy Sutton commended Sharpton to Chisholm, who took him on as an unpaid aide and campaign orator.

The Tilden teacher Gertrude Cromwell recalls, "I always gave the seniors a graduation party, and the one in 1972 was the last time I saw Alfred as an adolescent. When I saw him again, just a few months later, he was a man. It seemed as if he'd matured tremendously the minute he left school." He did attend Brooklyn College's School for Contemporary Learning for two years, but new opportunities were irresistible. Percy Sutton had become Manhattan borough president, and Sharpton's new mentors in the investment group began to make real money.



"They had me jumping on corporations like Macy's," Sharpton recalls, "and they got the contracts that resulted." Sutton denies that anyone in his circle got contracts through Sharpton. In any case, Sharpton was learning that, under the dispensation of white liberals, blackness was a card he could play for stakes that the Reverend William Jones did not approve of. He persuaded sports and concert promoters who profited from black audiences to give him contracts to publicize their events in black neighborhoods, and big batches of free tickets for ghetto youth. (In the early nineteen-eighties, the State Organized Crime Commission investigated allegations that he had passed the tickets to mob scalpers in return for kickbacks, but nothing was proved.)

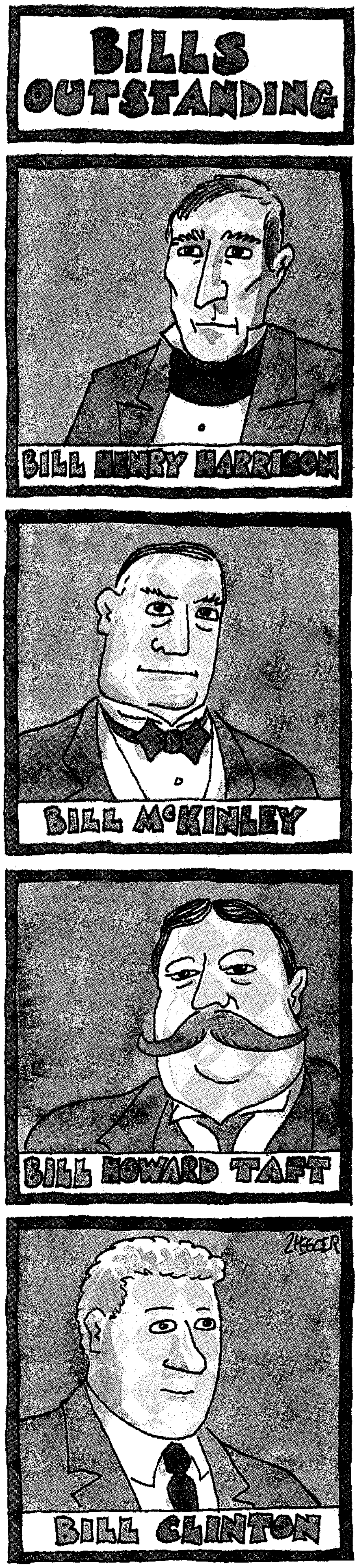
In 1973, when Sharpton was nineteen, he went backstage at a James Brown concert in Newark and asked the Godfather of Soul to do two shows to benefit the National Youth Movement. Brown agreed, and Sharpton brought eight thousand youngsters to the shows. Soon afterward, he used bluster and guile to book Brown at Madison Square Garden, whose management was wary of the singer's boisterous crowds. "I trusted him more than the promoters I had to deal with," Brown says. "They want to take all your personal feeling and instinct away. Alfred had special resources in standing up to that." Brown had lost his nineteen-year-old son, Teddy, in an accident, and took Al as a surrogate son. "We'd talk all night on the road about Moses and Job," Brown recalls. "I told him, 'Act like a man possessed.' "

Sharpton met his future wife Kathy Jordan while she was a singer travelling with Brown. (Later, Brown and his wife, Adrienne, became godparents to the Sharptons' two daughters.) He copied Brown's hair style, and has vowed to keep it for as long as Brown lives. In 1981, Brown and Sharpton cut a record together, "God Has Smiled on Me," and Sharpton calls that "the highest tribute James could pay me." Backed by a rocking female choir, the quicksilver Brown and a bellowing Sharpton sound like men possessed, in a gospel rap with the chorus "God has smiled on me / He has set me free; / God has smiled on me / He's been good to me."

Whatever God was up to, Sharpton spent most of the late seventies and early eighties as a hustler. William Jones and Jesse Jackson no longer had much influence on him, but he adapted Breadbasket's methods to demand promotional contracts on behalf of his National Youth Movement, as a "two-percenter"—an artist's representative. A number of businessmen with ties to organized crime were involved in the black-music industry. Sharpton made a promotional deal with Danny Pagano, a reputed lieutenant in the Genovese crime family, and moved the National Youth Movement's headquarters to an office provided free by Spring Records, a company friendly to Pagano.

In 1974, James Brown introduced Sharpton to the boxing promoter Don King. Soon Sharpton was urging black fighters to leave white promoters for King. In 1983, an F.B.I. sting operation against mobsters in the boxing industry caught Sharpton on videotape promising to help arrange a boxing promotion with King that was meant to launder drug-sale profits. Sharpton had done nothing incriminating at the meeting, but when he was confronted by agents he quickly agreed to become an F.B.I. informer, and made secret recordings of King and of the former heavyweight champion Larry Holmes.

In 1984, he talked his way into a lucrative contract to do promotion in minority communities for the fifty-city Victory Tour by Michael Jackson and



his brothers, and lavished the tour's funds on posters, radio ads, free tickets, and his own luxury accommodations in hotels, where he held forth to reporters on the music industry's exploitation of black artists and audiences.

Sharpton seems to have betrayed most of his associates during this period, leaving them nonplussed. "He was a guy from the street who knew how to play both sides against the middle, not a venal person you could grow to hate," an F.B.I. investigator says. "The F.B.I. 'flipped' him without having anything on him, but soon he was conning the Bureau. All they got from him was a tax case against King that unravelled in court. King doesn't trust him, but he still uses him—and vice versa." A journalist who exposed Sharpton's mob ties declares, "He's a stone con man. There's nothing else there." The F.B.I. man says, "Al never even got himself a lawyer when he was confronted after the sting. I think he got caught up in being on the team."

The Reverend William Jones: "I feel very sorry for Alfred. If I was angry with anyone, it was with those who massaged his young ego and caused him to believe that he was ready to step out and head some ill-defined national youth organization. You look at Alfred now in his separate parts, and there are too many. But if he's a con man, he has nothing to show for his conning. I have never sensed anything in Al Sharpton—and I'm very serious about this—that smacks of greed." Sharpton: "In many ways, society is totally a hustle from top to bottom. But there are those that aspire to rise above it, which is why I call that period in my life a weakness. My negatives are important, because I embody the scars and contradictions of my generation. Unlike King"—Martin Luther King—"I come from a major metropolis, with all the temptations, from the Broadway lights to the mob. Malcolm X and Powell came from the same type of environment, but at some point Adam gave up. Because of the double standards they ran on him, he became cynical. You can't let the bitterness become a poison to your system." Jesse Jackson: "With Alfred's gift of tongues, he could talk himself into and out of stuff too easily."

By 1985, when he was thirty-one, Sharpton was turning his energies to protests against drug-related crime and racial violence around the city. When he showed up in the streets and on TV in the controversy about the arrest and trial of the "subway gunman," Bernhard Goetz, Sharpton became a presence for New Yorkers who had never heard of him before. The following year, he hooked up with Maddox and Mason, who became his legal strategists, closest associates, and friends.

Working with them, a few aides, and support from shifting fringe groups, Sharpton spent sixteen-hour days guest-preaching at churches (he has never had his own congregation); addressing Saturday-morning rallies of his loyalists at the Slave Theatre, in Bedford-Stuyvesant, and then at P.S. 175, in Harlem (the latter broadcast on WWRL radio); attending many, often concurrent trials of whites he said were violent racists and blacks he said were wrongly accused; appearing on the Phil Donahue, Oprah Winfrey, and Morton Downey, Jr., shows; and leading demonstrations all over: the Statue of Liberty, the Helmsley Palace Hotel, the casinos of Atlantic City, the 1988 Democratic National Convention in Atlanta, the subway tracks of downtown Brooklyn, and white communities in the middle Hudson Valley and on Long Island.

Sharpton's income came from four sources. His wife, Kathy, worked as a secretary for the U.S. Army Reserves; he earned between twenty and thirty thousand dollars a year from promotional work, preaching, and lecturing; the New Alliance Party (a cultish, leftish group) gave him cheap office space and, for four years, about twelve thousand dollars a year from business profits (and he got them access to the news media in return); and James Brown sometimes provided financial assistance.

It was the Howard Beach incident in December of 1986 that gave Sharpton his first big arena for theatrical, exaggerated, and outright demagogic challenges to the criminal-justice system. Maddox announced that a court officer whose car had struck and killed Griffith was a racist accomplice of the white assailants. The police soon discovered that the driver had never met the assailants and that just before his car struck Griffith he had been with family and friends, one of whom was black, at a play at Brooklyn College. Sharpton and the attorneys seemed not to care. Their legal and public strategy, carried out with cold anger, seemed calculated to convince blacks that the criminal-justice system was hostile to them—an argument reinforced by whites' outrage at the false charges.

The pattern was repeated in 1987, in the Tawana Brawley case, which called up historical black memories of the most intimate exploitation. A grand jury, convened by Attorney General Robert Abrams, declared her story of rape by white law-enforcement officers a hoax, but Sharpton worked even that finding into a venerable script about whites falsely accusing blacks of raping white women: when he charged, falsely, that a white assistant district attorney had raped Brawley, the tables were turned. Maddox charged, without contradiction by Sharpton, that Abrams had masturbated over photographs of Brawley.

Sharpton had about two hundred core followers, most of them middle-aged blacks who appeared to be pushed to their limits by external abuses and inner demons. Sharpton's ease with publicity and with the eloquence of the pulpit and the civil-rights movement gave his followers a footing in history. And whenever he rolled his large eyes heavenward in piety, humility, or evasiveness, whenever he inserted himself in a tableau like that of Hawkins' family on their porch just after the murder—his head bowed, his face a study in grief and rage—he seemed willing to take upon himself the ridicule and contempt that all black people feel daily in whites' averted eyes and condescensions. In this respect, he thought, he differed from such prominent black preachers as Calvin Butts, who commanded Powell's old pulpit at Abyssinian Baptist. "The problem with Calvin is that he never had hard times," Sharpton says. "He always had the deference. I had to earn mine. The people that you have to *earn* respect from, you endear yourself to. The difference between Calvin and me is that Calvin wants the Resurrection with no Crucifixion." Recently, as Butts approached him on the street, Sharpton spread his arms and proclaimed, "Ah feel dat Ah'm in de presence of de Law-aw-awd!"

SHARPTON'S associate Alton Maddox was by all accounts a brilliant courtroom attorney, but some saw him as driven to enact a trial that never took place after policemen beat him, as a college student, in his home town of Newnan, Georgia. Sharpton, for all his militancy, enjoyed whites' company; Maddox, cordial enough in professional dealings with whites, expressed an almost bottomless hostility to them in his rhetoric and legal arguments. Yet the two men came to depend on each other greatly.

During the Brawley case, *Newsday* exposed Sharpton's past collaborations with the F.B.I., reporting that he had spied not only on mobsters but on black activists. Movement leaders abruptly ostracized him. Maddox, however, refused to believe the reports and insisted that Sharpton stay out front in the Brawley case, thus furthering Sharpton's career. Then Robert Abrams drove the two men even closer together.

Abrams had been a popular liberal politician since 1969, when he was elected Bronx borough president. As state attorney general since 1978, he had been an aggressive, if grandstanding, litigant for consumers, with an exemplary civil-rights record. By the time Governor Cuomo asked him to investigate the Brawley case, though, Abrams had grown accustomed to his political security in Albany. He was caught off guard when Maddox charged him with sexual depravity and Sharpton likened him to Hitler.

Abrams had begun looking into Sharpton's finances a decade earlier, but the investigation was dormant. In 1989, after the Brawley case ended, he indicted Sharpton on tax evasion and sixty-seven counts of grand larceny and fraud, alleging that over a period of seventeen years he had pocketed more than two hundred and fifty thousand dollars in funds raised for his National Youth Movement. Abrams also filed complaints against Maddox and Mason with lawyers' review panels (the charges including obstruction of justice for counselling Tawana Brawley and her mother to refuse to answer a grand jury's subpoena). While Sharpton was on trial for grand larceny and fraud, Maddox, his defense attorney, was suspended for noncoöperation with the review panel, but was allowed to finish, with an angry summation that got Sharpton acquitted. (The tax-evasion case was not resolved until this year, in a plea bargain.)

Sharpton was a free man. Maddox, it appeared, would never practice law again. Sharpton portrayed him as a martyr. At times, they would drift apart over differences of strategy, but Maddox served as a senior strategist for Sharpton's Senate campaign. When Sharpton is asked about him now, he just says, "Alton and I are different. I know Jews from Italians. . . ." He trails off.

For Abrams, Sharpton's acquittal would turn out to be a political loss as well as a legal one. "When Abrams indicted me, blacks got very defensive who didn't even agree with us on Brawley," Sharpton says. "Bill Jones had opinions pro and con on how we handled Brawley"; nonetheless, Jones opened his church to Brawley's mother as a "sanctuary" from the grand jury. Sharpton recalls, "When I was acquitted, he was sitting in the courtroom with Kathy and the kids, and he broke down and cried. That's what they didn't understand—the depth of our roots in the black community."

Actually, Sharpton had often escaped censure by his elders because they feared that whites would exploit their disagreements. Jesse Jackson kept a discreet public distance from the Howard Beach and Brawley protests. The Reverend Herbert Daughtry, an activist in Brooklyn, who has often worked with Sharpton and his associates, quietly called Maddox and Mason to his church to urge them to tone down their rhetoric against Abrams. A few black leaders—such as Brooklyn Assemblyman Roger Green, and Michael Meyers, the executive director of the New York Civil Rights Coalition—criticized Sharpton's tactics in public, but that was rare.

LATE in 1991, as Sharpton reflected upon his stabbing and his conversation with Cornel West, black politicians in New York were looking for a candidate for the United States Senate and seeing what William Jones calls "a terrible diminution in the quality of black political leadership in this city." Dinkins' and Sutton's generation of cosmopolitan black leaders moved easily among whites, especially among Jewish voters, but the next generation was more

Victoria Roberts

"You *wanted* to miss the Matisse show."

militant and more provincial. Sharpton, however, had been taken up by his elders at such an impressionable age that, for all his histrionics, he was a far better communicator with whites than most of his peers were. He talked to Sutton, Jones, Jackson, and some of his other mentors about running for the Senate, and they encouraged him.

New York's arcane election laws made it almost impossible for Sharpton to get on the primary ballot without the help of the Democratic Party state chairman, John Marino, who answers to Governor Cuomo. When Sharpton announced, in January of 1992, "I intend to formally throw my hair into the ring," Marino told the *News*, "We'll deal with him in the same fashion Louisiana Republicans dealt with David Duke." Sharpton responded, "I'm not advocating black supremacy and I've never advocated violence." His claims were true, but they were not what changed Marino's mind. Noting Sharpton's on-again, off-again ties to the New Alliance Party, the Democrats reasoned that the last thing they needed in a tough race against D'Amato was a third-party candidate, with superb access to the media, ridiculing their nominee. And Cuomo, it was said, hoped that in the Democratic primary Sharpton would siphon more black votes from two of the likely contenders, Abrams and Holtzman, than from Geraldine Ferraro, whom the Governor preferred.

Sharpton, too, used his color—as " 'acceptable' blackmail," says former Mayor Edward Koch. "He said to them, 'Listen, if you give almost every other candidate a listing on the ballot without petition signatures, then I'm entitled to it, too.' If they'd kept him off, though, it wouldn't have had anything to do with racism—they'd kept Lyndon LaRouche off—it would've been because Sharpton was an exotic. Nevertheless, because he *is* black, and because white politicians can never be in a situation where somebody, rightly or wrongly, yells racism, they would buckle. And he knew that. I mean, he plays them like a piano board." Through maneuvers with Marino and at the state convention, Sharpton eluded some rules and became an official Democratic candidate without a single petition signature or the formal, public endorsement of any Party leader.

Sharpton's campaign was underfunded, but the black inner-city churches supported him as both prodigal and favorite son. And on the streets, black politicians crossing his path noticed, he drew spontaneous crowds. "People just pushed past Towns to get to Sharpton," one of Representative Edolphus Towns's campaign aides recalls of an outdoor "family day" rally at a housing project in Bedford-Stuyvesant. Towns had endorsed Holtzman, but he immediately changed his itinerary to stay overnight in the project with Sharpton.

Sharpton also worked in boardrooms, suburban churches, and the parlors of brownstones to win the support of black professionals, who felt that none of the other candidates understood their special frustrations. As a group, first-generation black homeowners have heavier mortgages and fewer assets than whites, and even in good times segregation keeps their property values lower. Also, middle-class blacks told Sharpton, their careers felt tenuous. Patricia Irvin, a Wall Street lawyer and a trustee of Princeton University, who supported Sharpton, says, "It's not gut racism that keeps a white partner from taking a black associate under his wing. But black associates don't get equally promising assignments. There's no way to discuss it, because people become very defensive."

Sharpton may have seemed a dubious champion of the struggle against the "glass ceiling." But he, too, had a résumé—of racial encounters he had handled with ingratiation as well as confrontation. At campaign forums on Wall Street, his intimidating appearance and reputation made everybody tense; then he would break the tension with humor, to the relief of blacks who had expected to be embarrassed and whites who had expected to be damned. He understood the issues at least as well as his opponents; at a forum sponsored by Black Democrats of Westchester, Abrams, Holtzman, and a surrogate for Ferraro traded petty ethics charges, but Sharpton spoke convincingly to black-middle-class concerns.

Sharpton was closer to those concerns than many of his listeners knew. In 1990, his family, facing eviction from their apartment, in the Prospect Heights section of Brooklyn, for nonpayment of rent, and weary of dangers to him in New York, had managed, with the help of friends, to take a twelve-hundred-dollar-a-month garden apartment on a quiet street in suburban Englewood, New Jersey. It is a pleasant, modest place, sunlit through large windows, full of the children's toys and Sharpton's memorabilia, tapes, and books. Shortly after the election, he was threatened with eviction there, too—for nonpayment of rent. Sharpton earned twenty-nine thousand dollars in 1991, according to his tax returns—most of it from lecture fees and church offerings, seven hundred dollars from a cameo as a street preacher in Spike Lee's film "Malcolm X." James Brown says, "He needs to do more for his family." (Brown pays the tuition for Sharpton's daughters, Dominique, eight, and Ashley, seven, at a small private school.)

"Whatever position you achieved," Sharpton told his radio audience during the campaign, "somebody paid a price to open the door for you. James Brown was always better than Michael Jackson. The difference is, James came before the movement, and he didn't have the options Michael had. Michael needs to know that CBS didn't cross him over; Martin Luther King crossed him over. But now you sit on a pedestal of wealth and cannot be involved in the community?" This challenge was reminiscent of Sharpton's pitches to black artists and boxers. "How do [blacks] get from Wall Street to [Brooklyn's] Bedford Avenue if they live in Scarsdale?" he asked, rhetorically, in an interview with David L. Lewis, of the White Plains *Reporter Dispatch*. "They connect with somebody who can interpret Bedford Avenue on Wall Street."

After Patricia Irvin watched Sharpton interpret Bedford Avenue to a mostly white audience at her law firm, Milbank, Tweed, Hadley & McCloy, she organized another forum, at the New York Sheraton, where several hundred black bankers, lawyers, and executives came to hear Marcia Ann Gillespie, Cornel West, and Derrick Bell, a professor of law at New York University, question Sharpton. "The black professional community has an incredible grapevine," Irvin says.

Sharpton conducted himself professionally in televised debates. Like Jesse Jackson in 1984 and 1988, he took advantage of the twin benefits of minority status: because he wasn't going to win, his opponents didn't bother to attack him; because he was black, they didn't dare. He followed Jackson's precedent, permitting himself only a few indulgences: once, when Abrams and Holtzman challenged Ferraro to release her tax returns, Sharpton said, "If anybody wants to see mine, Bob Abrams has them."

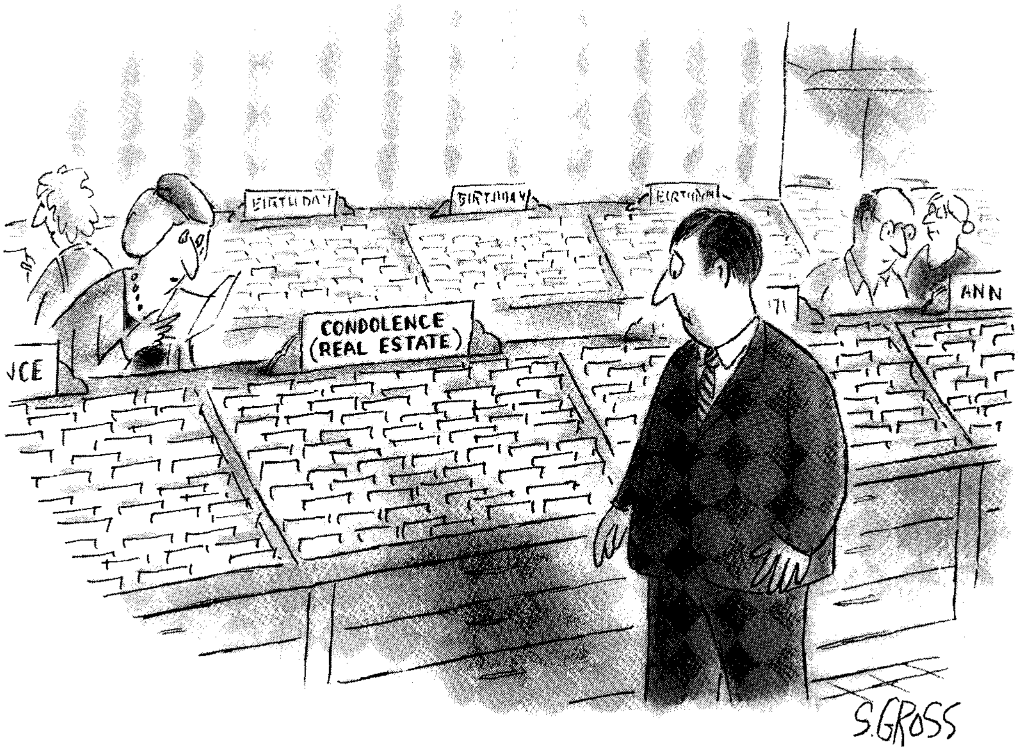
SHARPTON carried sixty-seven per cent of the black vote—an improvement on the surveys in the nineteen-eighties that had given him less than fifteen-per-cent approval by blacks, and a figure not far behind Jesse Jackson's seventy-two per cent of the black vote in his first New York primary race, for President, in 1984. Sharpton got fourteen per cent of the total vote and twenty-one per cent in the city.

On primary night, there was no mistaking an elevation in his tone: "Our conditions are too grave, our pain is too intense, for us to get center stage and use it to act ugly and divisive. Everyone talks about how we've grown. Yes, and we've matured to the point where we want results. . . . Whoever, at the end of the night, is the Democratic nominee, they're gonna have to deal with that reality. Some say, 'Reverend, will you work with the nominee?' We will *discuss* with the nominee! . . . The way we're going, we can pick up allies. The days of shooting from the hip are over."

"Whatever anyone would have said about Al has now been purged," Herman D. Farrell, Jr., the Manhattan Democratic Party leader, observed. "From this point on, we'll judge him on what he does."

Eleven days after the primary, Sharpton went to Washington for the Congressional Black Caucus Foundation's annual dinner (a function he had picketed with a bullhorn two years before). Four thousand black political paladins did not part like the Red Sea, but Sharpton was widely recognized and pleasantly received. When Ron Dellums, the tall, elegant representative from California, extended his hand and said, "Good evening, Senator," Sharpton fell to one knee and bowed his head, like a squire about to be knighted. Governor Bill Clinton waved and said, "Hi, Al."

"I went to the Nee-gro Black Caucus," Sharpton told his Saturday-morning audience a week later. "All the big blacks in the country, who two years ago turned their noses down at us, was running up and shaking our hands. It's because of you that took your pennies and rented buses, that marched in cold weather, standing out there when the people called you names, that we won. They're runnin' around now, trying to analyze how we got our vote, as if it was some fluke. We planted that vote in the concrete of Howard Beach and Bensonhurst. We didn't get no vote in the TV



debates; they were the frosting on the cake. Cake been baking for six years. Deal with the cake!"

Sharpton's patrons in the Democratic Party said he had showed that New York's political culture is resilient enough to lift a potential leader out of a netherworld. Others said he had showed that New York's political culture allows any demagogue who cleans up his act just a little to rocket to political respectability. "I think I've redefined the middle," Sharpton told Martin Gottlieb, of the *Times*. "I think the middle and me both moved a little toward each other."

After the primary, Sharpton got an invitation from Temple Beth-El, in Great Neck, to address a conference of blacks and Jews. Dele Olojede, of *Newsday*, saw Dinkins' chief adviser, Bill Lynch, arriving to deliver the keynote speech, and reported, "A white woman walked up to him and, presumably noticing that he was black, asked if he was Sharpton's driver. 'How quickly things change,' Lynch remarked sarcastically."

ROBERT ABRAMS had been the first and most prominent Jewish elected official to support the candidacy of the city's first African-American mayor, David Dinkins. And by any other standard that blacks might have been expected to use in the general election between Abrams and D'Amato, Abrams should have come out ahead. But he still had Sharpton under indictment for tax evasion, and Sharpton never did "*discuss* with the nominee" to the point of endorsing or even speaking well of him. Still, if only to repay a debt to Democrats who had got him onto the primary ballot, Sharpton eventually decided that undoing his nemesis was not as important as undoing D'Amato.

Six years earlier, Sharpton had joined his mentor Bishop Washington in endorsing D'Amato, who had promised and delivered a large grant for an anti-drug program to be sponsored by the Washington Temple. Now some black ministers and politicos who appreciated just such service were drifting into D'Amato's camp, and at the last minute Sharpton tried to stop them. He told friends that he didn't want his feud with Abrams to excuse anyone's toadying to D'Amato. He told the congregation at Mount Ollie Baptist Church, in Brownsville, the Sunday before the election, "They tell me how D'Amato is running around Brooklyn to the churches. I hope they got him on his knees. . . . We should not allow our churches to become shifted from a house of prayer into a den of thieves. . . . Everything Martin Luther King lived for, Al D'Amato voted against." Sharpton said similar things on black radio and to reporters.

His efforts were too little and too late—largely because he had long ago enshrined his own battles with Abrams in local black mythology as Good versus Evil. "I supported Abrams and tried to raise money for him in the community," Percy Sutton recalls, "but I found great difficulty. They feel Abrams 'did in' Sharpton, Maddox, and Mason." D'Amato won by just eighty thousand votes, out of more than six million. He ought to have been swamped by Bill Clinton's strong Democratic victory in the state. An analysis by Prime New York, an election-consulting firm, shows that in the most heavily black election districts in New York City alone, nearly fifty thousand blacks who voted for President abstained from the Senate race, and another twelve thousand voted for minor-party candidates; blacks statewide abstained at a rate fifty per cent higher than whites. D'Amato won not so much because blacks supported him outright (he carried less than twenty per cent of a small black vote) as because a great many of Sharpton's hundred and sixty-six thousand primary voters refused to make a choice between D'Amato and Abrams at all. Sharpton was more responsible than anyone for the politics of spite that drove so many blacks away from Abrams.

LESS than a week before the general election, a predominantly nonwhite jury acquitted a seventeen-year-old black, Lemrick Nelson, of murdering Yankel Rosenbaum, a twenty-nine-year-old Hasidic Jew, in Crown Heights. Nelson had been in a black mob that was crying "Get the Jew!" when someone stabbed Rosenbaum, presumably to retaliate for the death, some hours earlier, of a seven-year-old black boy, Gavin Cato, who was struck by a car driven by a Hasidic man. At the time—in August, 1991—Sharpton had denounced what he claimed was the city's preferential treatment of Hasidic Jews, and had even flown to Israel to try serving a civil summons on the driver.

Nelson's acquittal seemed to turn Sharpton's scenarios of racist conspiracy inside out. Two years before, in Bensonhurst, the conviction of one white man of murder and others on lesser charges had not satisfied him as justice. In Crown Heights, only one of the black assailants, Nelson, went to trial; and not only did the jury distrust the testimony of police officers (who said that a bloody knife was found on Nelson and that Rosenbaum, before dying, had identified him as his attacker) but several jurors dined with Nelson and his lawyer to celebrate his acquittal.

When Jewish demonstrators adopted Sharpton's own chant of "No justice, no peace!" he surprised everybody by endorsing Hasidic leaders' calls for a federal investigation. He said, "Justice is not something we oppose. I *always* ask the federal government to come in. They refused to come for Michael Griffith and Yusuf Hawkins. That doesn't mean they shouldn't come now. Certainly they should, but not to create a double standard. . . . We are against murder. The question is: Is everyone else against murder except when it comes to us? Let's play by one set of rules."

He had never stopped reminding audiences that social pathology involved more than racism. "I've learned that if you're going to take a moral cutting edge," Sharpton said recently, "you can't choose who it's going to cut." When black youngsters stampeded nine of their fellows to death outside a concert at City College, in 1991, Sharpton told Mike McAlary, of the *Post*, that they did "not have the right to behave like animals. . . . They did this to themselves." No longer the youth leader, now a parent, he told his followers at a Saturday-morning rally, "We need to challenge our children that we did not fight and die and bleed for them to bring knives and guns to school. . . . Even though I understand the underlying social conditions, I also understand the conditions my grandmother went through, and she didn't have no blade in her pocket."

In Sharpton's native East New York, the Reverend Johnny Ray Youngblood—another of the Reverend William Jones's protégés—leads an interracial, interfaith organization called East Brooklyn Congregations. It is working with the Board of Education to found two small high schools; building new homes; and shunning the racial conflicts that Sharpton dramatizes. Sharpton has professed admiration for Youngblood, but he has not given up his own ways.

When, a few weeks after the Crown Heights acquittal, a group of Hasidim assaulted a homeless black man—an oft-convicted burglar named Ralph Nimmons—in an alley behind their Crown Heights headquarters, Sharpton helped obscure the circumstances of the beating by counselling Nimmons to refuse coöperation with a grand jury and demanding yet another special state prosecutor. (Governor Cuomo finally refused.) Then, as it became clear that this mode of protest had worn thin, Sharpton let reporters know that he and Nimmons had sent a get-well card to a rabbi who had been assaulted on the Lower East Side. The *Times* ran Sharpton's photograph three times in ten days in connection with Nimmons. Sharpton had not had much news coverage since the primary. He "forgot that when the campaign is over and everybody goes home, the 'hero' stands alone," James Brown reflects.

As Sharpton approaches the end of his fourth decade, he still faces a jail sentence for blocking a subway train during a protest about the Howard Beach incident, in 1987. But he believes that with his strong showing in the Senate primary he has gone beyond such mentors as the Reverend William Jones, who once ran, unsuccessfully, for Brooklyn borough president, and Sutton, who left public life partly because the press cast him as "the black candidate" in the 1977 mayoral campaign. Nor does Sharpton find a model now in Jesse Jackson, though Jackson introduced him as "one of our young lions" at a rally during the Senate race. Sharpton says, "I have the benefit of seeing what happened to Jesse, who ended up"—after his own election campaigns—"like a plane with no airport to land in. Some of the disappointment with Jesse is that people think he should have made more firm steps. Maybe he should've run for mayor of D.C."

Sharpton could win a congressional seat, especially in Brooklyn, though he has vowed not to challenge a black incumbent. His loyalty to Tawana Brawley would not be apt to cost him an election in a predominantly black district, even though many blacks question whether she told the truth. "Don't forget that I haven't just gone forward from a Brawley case to where I am now," he said recently. "I'm also goin' back to what I grew up as." (That may be the closest he can come to admitting that his Brawley strategy was a mistake.)

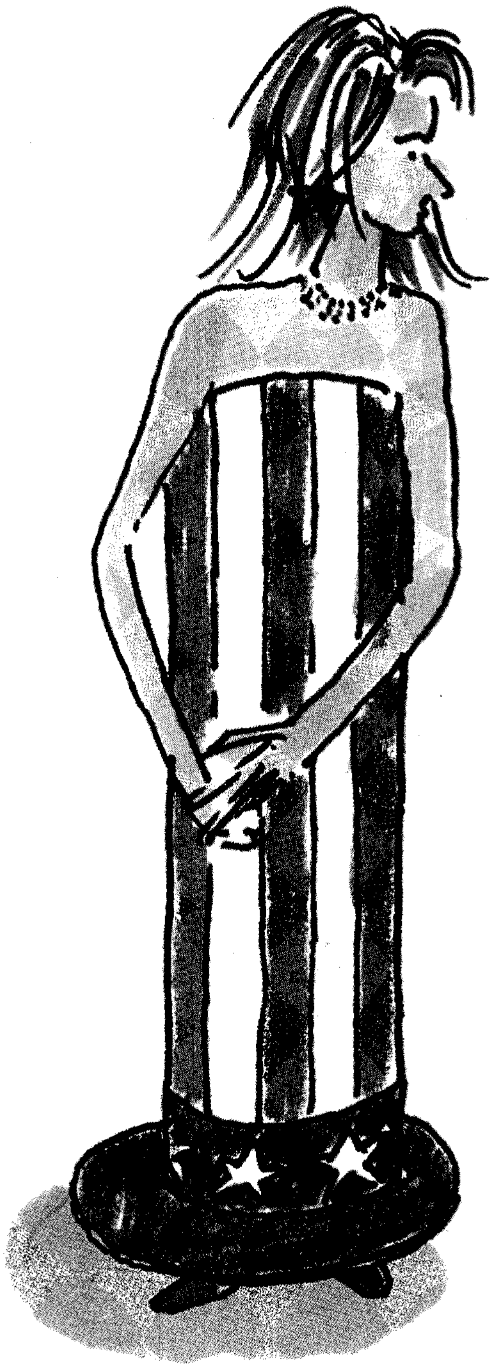
"I have always said nice things about him, even though I've called him a charlatan," Ed Koch says. " 'Charlatan' comes from the fact that truth doesn't mean anything to him. But he has a sense of humor, he's smart, he's a bona-fide leader and an exceedingly able strategist. I happen to like him. There are many black leaders—like Malcolm X, who recognized that if he was to be a true leader of his people he had to change his views. And I would not deny that opportunity to Al Sharpton, and I believe he has that potential. Absolutely, he has it."

Dinkins' adviser Bill Lynch says, "I see all the right signs, but I know his history."

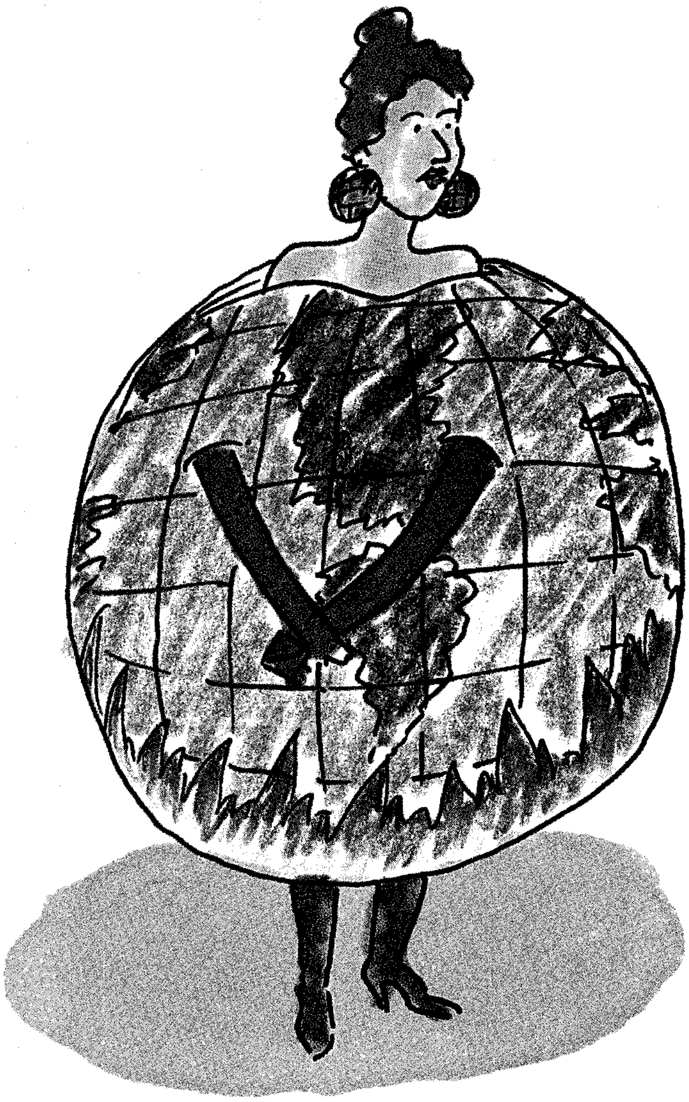
Sharpton recently gave his version of history at a Brooklyn church: "He took the Cross. And somebody said, 'Jesus, you don't have to suffer like this. Why don't you drop that Cross?' But He looked two thousand years into the future, and He saw a little boy named Al Sharpton. And He said, 'If I don't go, he won't have a way.' . . . I know you read stuff in the newspapers, but they don't tell my story. Twenty-seven years I didn't hear from my father. I remember nights, when they wrote nasty things about me, I looked for somebody to talk to, but I didn't have a number to call my daddy. But if you hear from my father, tell him it's all right now, tell him I have another Daddy, who woke me up this morning, and started me on my way. And if anybody asks you about Brother Sharpton, don't tell them I'm a politician. Don't tell 'em I'm an activist. Don't even tell 'em I'm an evangelist. Just tell 'em I'm a pilgrim and a stranger." ♦

GOWNS FOR THE GALAS

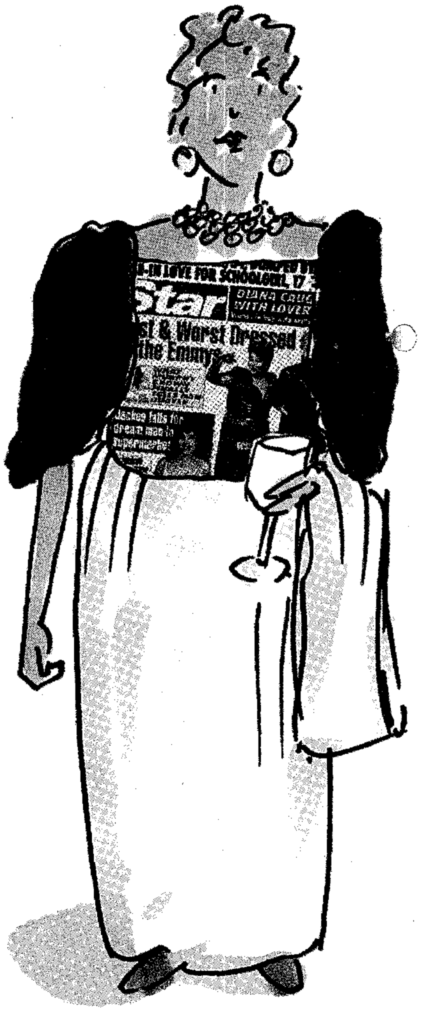
BY MICHAEL CRAWFORD



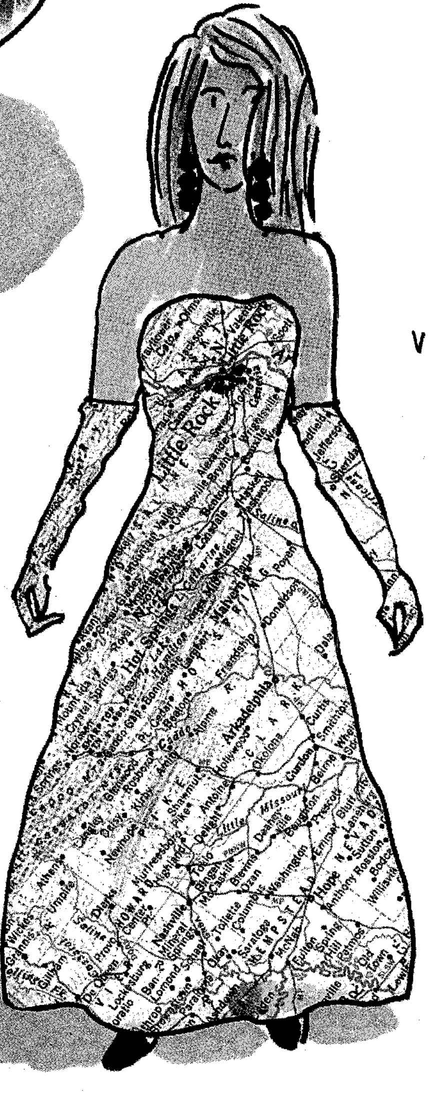
MARY MATALIN'S "I'M OUT OF A JOB—I'LL HOLD MY NOSE AND BOOGIE" GOWN



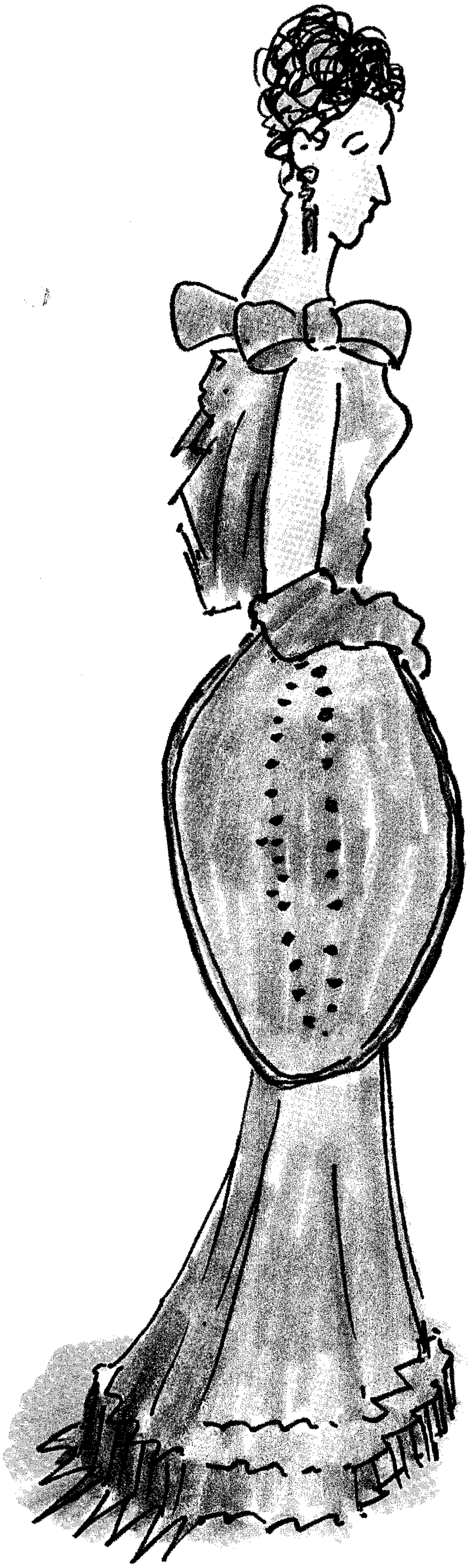
THE AL GORE
FOR VIVIENNE WESTWOOD
GLOBAL-WARMING GOWN


IN LOVE FOR SCHOOLGIRL, 17
Star
DIANA CRUIS WITH LOVER
Best & Worst Dressed at the Emmys
Jackee falls for dream man in supermarket

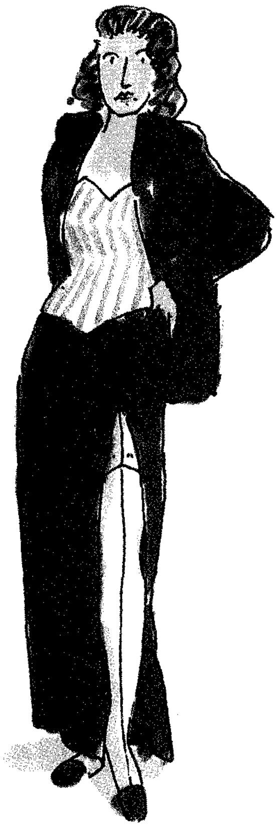
ADOLFO'S
"HAIL TO THE TABS"
VELVET-AND-SATIN GOWN


Little Rock
Hot Springs
Arkadelphia
Hope

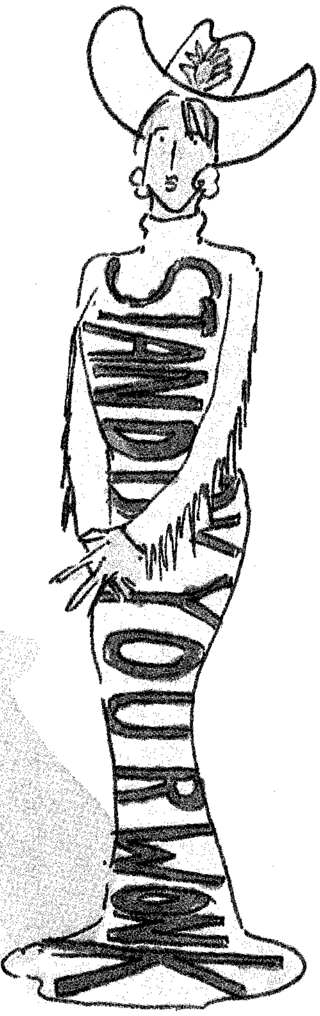
LINDA BLOODWORTH-THOMASON'S "I STILL BELIEVE IN A PLACE CALLED HOPE" GOWN



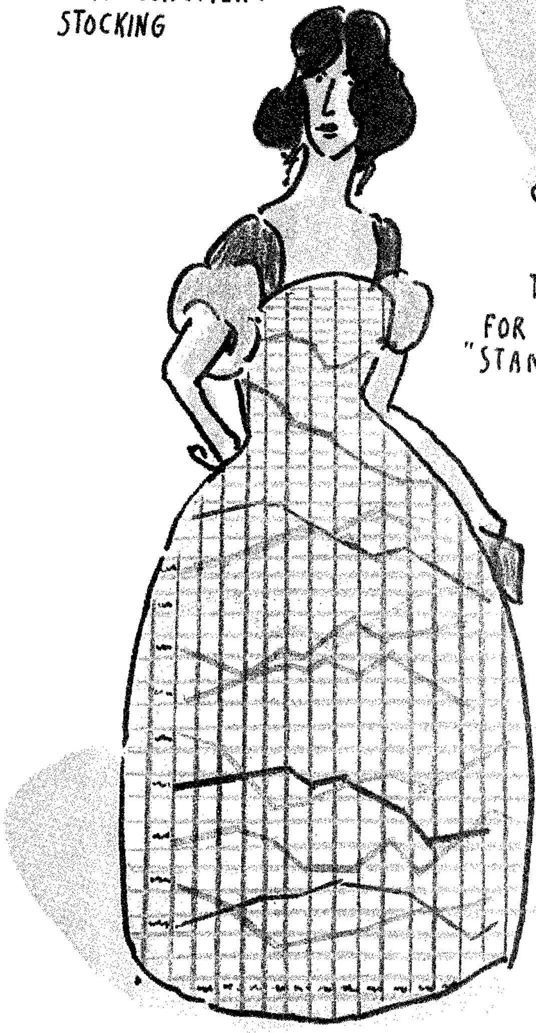
CHANEL'S "HOMMAGE À THE WATERMELON CAPITAL" GOWN



DONNA KARAN'S SLIT SATIN SKIRT, WASHINGTON MONUMENT STOCKING



THE BOB MACKIE FOR TAMMY WYNETTE "STAND BY YOUR WONK" GOWN



ROBERT B. REICH'S LEADING-ECONOMIC-INDICATORS GOWN

CRAWFORD

PROFILE

LIFE LINES

Behind the calm, pure order of Agnes Martin's paintings lies a restless journey that drove her from the New York art world of the sixties to a solitary oasis in the New Mexico desert, where she found her artistic rebirth.

BY BENITA EISLER

At eighty, Agnes Martin is probably the most famous unknown artist in America. Since 1958, when she first exhibited in New York, at the Betty Parsons Gallery, Martin has attracted and retained the steady attention of critics—no small achievement in a period increasingly obsessed with new talent. She has shown at two of the most important galleries of their time and place, starting with Parsons in the late nineteen-fifties and moving in 1975, after a period with the Robert Elkon Gallery, to Pace, which has represented her ever since. Examples of Martin's work have been acquired in this country by most major museums with any claim to represent American postwar painting, and by the more important European collections, both public and private, that have an interest in this period. (The Swiss and the Germans seem particularly passionate about Martin's art.) Yet to many of those acquainted with the work of Martin's slightly older contemporaries who showed at Parsons—Mark Rothko and Barnett Newman; Ad Reinhardt, her friend and fan; Ellsworth Kelly, her favorite neighbor on lower Manhattan's Coenties Slip; and Georgia O'Keeffe, a friend at an earlier period in their lives—the name Agnes Martin usually draws a blank.

The reasons for Martin's relative obscurity have much to do with the cult of celebrity that came to dominate post-nineteen-fifties America. Unlike her better-known peers, Martin had never been accorded a retrospective by a major American museum until the Whitney gave her one, last November. (The exhibit runs through January 31st.) Still more significant, her work reproduces so poorly that it's rarely reproduced; her best-known grid paintings—square canvases measuring six by six feet, with pale grounds of barely perceptible color divided by pencil or graphite lines—all but disappear in reduced-scale photographs.

Then, too, there is the perennial problem of categories and labels. The question of where Martin belongs historically, along with more theoretical discussions about her art, has been fairly regularly debated in the small world of art magazines. But public awareness of an artist tends to require a firmly fixed label on the product. In art, taxonomy is destiny. Martin's impersonal geometries, all-over grid patterns, and muted palette have prompted critics to claim her as the Mother of the Minimalists. Martin, however, defines herself unhesitatingly as an Abstract Expressionist. "My work is about emotion," she declares. "Not personal emotion, abstract emotion. It's about those subtle moments of happiness we all experience."

By the same token, the hard to classify, like Martin, have avoided the dangers of disposability. As much as anything else, though, Martin's own history and character are responsible for her spectral presence on the art scene. Like the unearthly light that seems to flicker on and off just beyond her own grids, Martin's alternation of absence and reappearance has made for an uneven career path.

In 1967, just as Martin was beginning to receive the kind of recognition from museums and collectors which signals that an artist is here to stay, she left New York, ostensibly because her South Street studio had been torn down. "Living in the city was bad enough," she said. "I just couldn't face living uptown." The moment of her exile coincided with the media's discovery of the contemporary artist: in the new social order, artists were "making the scene" as lionized guests of money old and new, in the company of rock stars and politicians and prizefighters. Andy Warhol's dead-white hair became as familiar as Jackie Onassis's dark bouffant. The new *People* magazine published its first story about an artist—Georgia O'Keeffe, in her signature black robe. Robert Rauschenberg was on the cover of *Time.*

Martin, meanwhile, was driving from New York to Northern California in a pickup truck hooked to a camper. She spent the winter looking down at the Pacific from a trailer park just south of Big Sur. When spring came, she headed for northern Canada, and by 1968 she had parked her camper by the Grand Canyon. She was still courting solitude, but not oblivion. "I had established my market and I felt free to leave," she says.

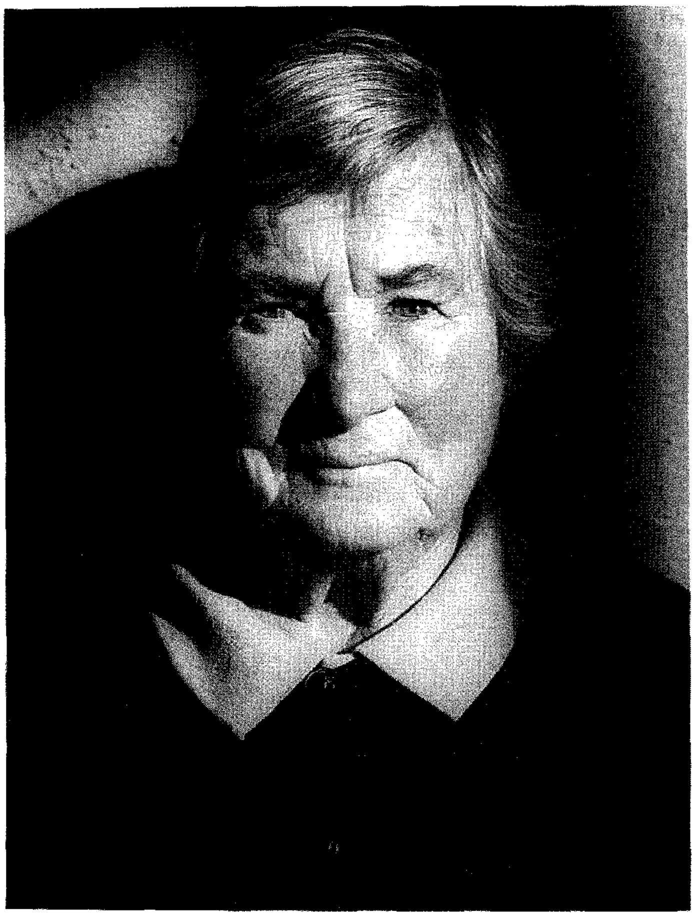
Back in 1961, Martin had left the Betty Parsons Gallery. Leo Castelli, the dealer she had hoped might represent her, proved unreceptive. (Castelli has no recollection of actually turning down Martin's work, which he claims to have always admired. But he concedes that he might have had a full roster at the time, since he was representing Jasper Johns, Rauschenberg, Frank Stella, and Cy Twombly.) Possibly at Castelli's suggestion, Martin went to Robert Elkon, who had just opened a gallery on the second floor of 1063 Madison Avenue. There her small exhibits were often sold out by the opening, while the artist remained invisible.

"Beauty is reassuring," Jean-Paul Sartre once wrote in an essay on Tintoretto. For most of this century, though, beauty in art has been discredited. Sophisticated critics feel more anxious than reassured by its presence. In part, this is a problem of all absolutes; beauty, like virtue, paralyzes the analytic faculty. Writers on Martin tend to reach for paradox to explain their reaction to her work.

"Her formula is reductive to the extreme, yet the result is somehow personal and even romantic to the opposite extreme," one critic conceded. And

Robert Pincus-Witten, reviewing Lawrence Alloway's 1966 anthology exhibit of Systemic artists (his formulation), which included Martin, declared, "Her touch is so deft that one feels, despite the rigidity of her conception, that one is faced with an exquisite artistic personality. The effect, so to speak, runs counter to the economy of the means."

I saw my first Agnes Martin painting in the early nineteen-seventies, at the home of a collector of contemporary art. Called "Night Sea," it hung at the top of a staircase, invisible until you arrived on the landing. Then it hit you with the full force of revelation: a shimmering golden grid that seemed to hover above a velvety blue ground.



Agnes Martin photographed in Taos in 1992.

HERB RITTS

"A painter in her sixties living in New Mexico," I was informed when I asked about the artist. A few months later, the painting was gone—sold. Another artist's work hung in its place. My disappointment felt like a betrayal. Somehow, I had laid claim to the picture—not because I wanted to own it but, rather, the reverse. "Night Sea" suggested an art that repudiated private possession, demanding instead protection from the vagaries of taste and value.

Martin's art has always elicited an intensely personal response. Kasha Linville, writing in *Artforum* in 1971, acknowledged that a small show of Martin's work from the nineteen-sixties, at the School of Visual Arts, "moved me more profoundly than any of the stripped-down, Minimalist or lyric color painting of the last decade that I have seen," and confessed to a near inability to consider Martin's work critically. "Once you are caught in one of her paintings, it is an almost painful effort to pull back from the private experience she triggers to examine the way the picture is made."

The summoning power of Martin's work and the sense of participation it elicits—"the desire to simply let yourself flow through it, or let it flow through you," in Linville's phrase—evoke, inevitably, a spiritual experience. "An Art That's Almost Prayer" was the title of a review of two concurrent Martin exhibitions in 1976 by Hilton Kramer, a critic not given to displays of reverence in print. The artist's early grid paintings, shown at the Elkon Gallery, had, for Kramer, "the quality of a religious utterance," while the Pace Gallery housing her recent work—vertical forms in soft pastel colors—seemed "to be filled with an almost heavenly light."

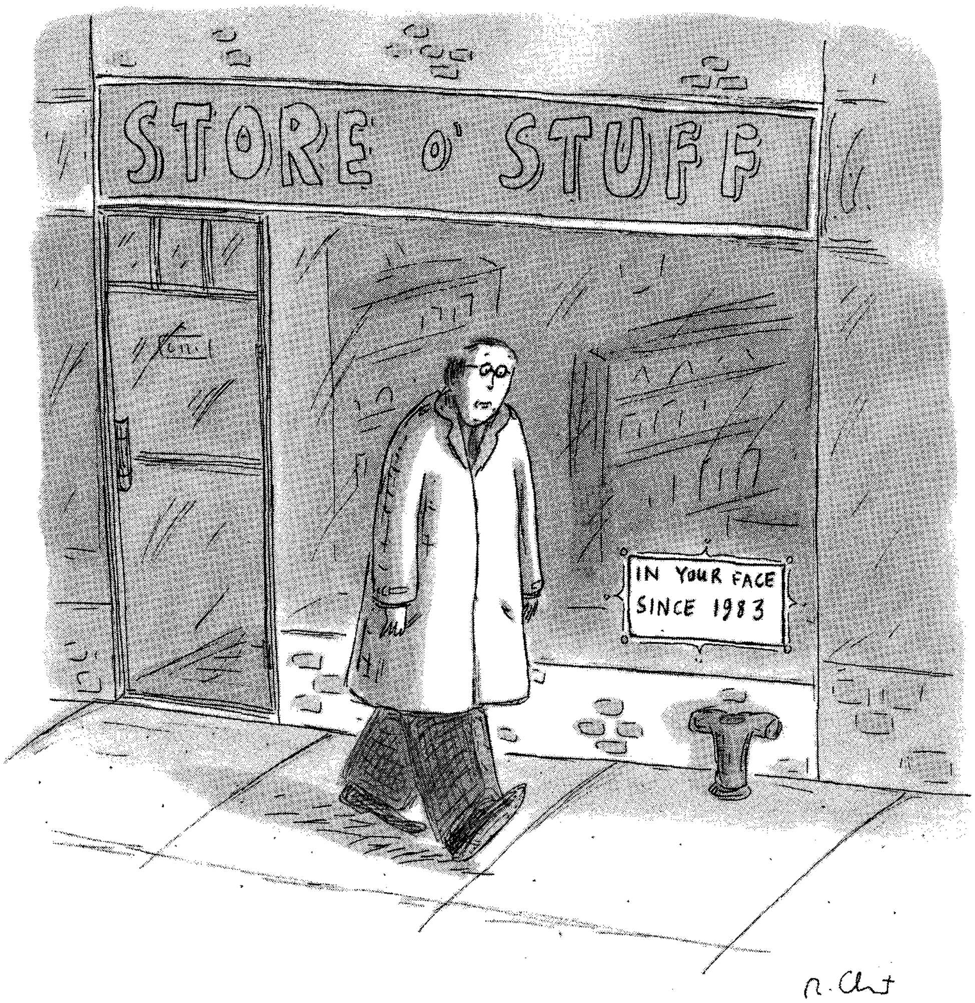
Such responses have been encouraged by Martin's writings, which were published at the time of her first one-woman museum exhibition, in 1973, at the University of Pennsylvania's Institute of Contemporary Art—an event that coincided with her emergence from a period of self-imposed exile. Declamatory in style and tone, these texts, which include aphorisms, poetry, and a series of parables called the Willie Stories, alternate between orphic utterance and preceptorial injunction. A few months ago, when I spoke with Martin by telephone before going to New Mexico to meet her, she told me that she would like me to read a more recent collection of her writings, which was published early in 1992 by the Kunstmuseum in Winterthur, Switzerland, to accompany an exhibition of her work there.

Taken together, the two collections left me uneasy about the artist I was to meet. Conventionally poetic evocations of nature ("The underside of the leaf / Cool in shadow / Sublimely unemphatic / Smiling of innocence") were followed by homilies that seemed to contradict the shimmering openness of the painting ("Suffering is necessary for freedom from suffering"; "There is no way to describe the reward of absolute obedience"). Joy and happiness—emotions that Martin has decreed to be the only possible subject of art—sounded invoked rather than experienced.

The sole likeness of the artist I had ever seen was a photograph taken in Taos in 1954, when Martin was forty-two. An anxious-looking woman, forehead deeply furrowed, mouth slightly open, confronts the camera with the direct gaze of a child. The pained reserve in the sitter's expression reminded me of certain daguerreotype portraits.

Forty years later, the woman in the photograph is perfectly recognizable. The square face is broader, and now that her hair is gray, though cut to the same earlobe length that Martin has worn for many years, she resembles a Dutch elder in a Hals group portrait—a suggestion reinforced by a motionless composure. She awaited my arrival seated on a sofa, wearing baggy jeans and a sweatshirt printed with sprigged flowers; her left arm, in a blue canvas sling, rested on a pile of cushions.

Five weeks earlier—and three days after she moved to a retirement community—Martin had fallen and broken her wrist. Despite the pain that any movement of the forearm still triggered, she radiated a patient good humor. Her Whitney exhibit was about to open, and she was clearly buoyed by the excitement of making the trip to New York. The impending event had dulled—or, at



least, deferred—any sense of loss that may have accompanied her move from a house and studio in Galisteo, New Mexico, where she had lived and worked for many years. Her new home is a three-room unit in a cluster of identical modular suites, where a few touches of regional architecture, like tile roofs, try unsuccessfully to soften the curse of uniformity.

"I don't have many possessions anyway, so I didn't have to store much," she said. Sparsely furnished, the three rooms had none of the claustrophobic feel of small spaces that have to accommodate the accumulated stuff of a lifetime. In the living room, there was the sofa, a rocker, a side table, and a Victorian tufted armchair newly upholstered in a surprising salmon-pink brocade—the gift of a friend. No books were to be seen, and the only art on view consisted of an Indian textile, appliquéd with bits of mirror—the kind of thing you might see in a student dormitory room—two small aboriginal bark pictures, and a reproduction of Georgia O'Keeffe's "White Canadian Barn II."

"I don't like O'Keeffe's late work, but it's amazing to think that she was doing abstract painting in 1917," Martin said. The barn, flat white against a bright-blue sky, painted on the Gaspé Peninsula in 1932, is one of Martin's favorite works by O'Keeffe, and serves as a reminder of the shared origins of the two artists: granddaughters of pioneers who made the journey west in covered wagons, both were prepared for a life and legacy of hard work.

Agnes Bernice Martin was born on a farm in Macklin, Saskatchewan, in 1912. She was the third of four children, coming after a brother and a sister and before another brother. Her grandparents on both sides had emigrated from Scotland to Canada. When she was two, her father, the manager of a grain elevator, died of injuries sustained as a volunteer in the Boer War. The young family moved in with Agnes's maternal grandfather, Robert Kinnon, and after a few years they moved again, this time to Calgary, then to Vancouver. There her mother supported them by renovating and reselling houses. Maternal authority was maintained by strict discipline, and self-reliance was expected from an early age. When she was about six, Martin recalls, she had to have her tonsils removed. Her mother put her on the streetcar with carfare and instructions about where to get off for the hospital. No one had told her that the operation meant staying overnight. The next morning, she was sent home on the streetcar, alone. "I wasn't the least bit scared," she says.

The happiest times in Martin's childhood were summers she spent in Victoria with her Grandfather Kinnon, a prosperous wheat farmer and agronomist. From the age of two and a half, "I was his favorite and he was mine," she recalls. "I felt 'first' with my grandfather. I've never felt first with anybody else. He was a Scotsman, first of all, and he was a man who tried to be virtuous, *really* tried. Not just to live a moral life but to be a really good man. He didn't talk to me, but somehow he influenced me tremendously."

Martin's grandfather, intelligent and broad-minded in an atmosphere of stern Scotch Presbyterianism, seems to have been the only source of loving indulgence in her youth. She recalls that one summer when she was a teen-ager and was visiting him and his second wife in Victoria, neighbors invited her to a party. Her step-grandmother told her to be home at ten o'clock. When she protested that the party would be only starting then, her grandfather said, "We get up at seven—be home before then."

None of the adults in her family had any interest in art, and if the subject was taught at school Martin has no recollection of it. She does recall doing a lot of drawing at home with her older brother. At eight or nine, she was saving her pocket money to buy prints of famous paintings. They were a little bigger than postcards, and they came in a series. She vividly remembers the first one she bought—Millet's "Angelus." Then Agnes and her brother would try to copy the prints. "He was much better than I was," she says. Agnes's mother and sister, following the tradition of women as makers of useful household goods, did handwork "every time they sat down, all their lives—knitting, hooking rugs," Martin says proudly. "My sister was really marvellous. She could do anything, from buttonholes to huge tablecloths." (Feminist critics have found in Martin's all-over patterns of broken lines or delicate rectangles analogies to various techniques of needlework, such as the running stitch used in basting or the fancier drawnwork. To other observers her constructions, some of which use tiny nailheads, suggest nineteenth-century American quilts that adopt the functional knot as a design element to create the corners of squares.)

The Martins were also an athletic and competitive family. Agnes excelled in swimming. A provincial champion and local medallist, she won Olympic tryouts in 1928, but there was no money to go on to the Games. In 1931, when she was nineteen, she left Vancouver for Bellingham, Washington, to take care of her sister, Maribel, now married, who had become ill during a difficult pregnancy. "I never went back," she says. "As soon as I came, I found out you could work your way through college in America." She added a year of high school in Bellingham, and then, realizing that she needed a profession to become a citizen, enrolled in the local state-teachers' college. (She did become an American citizen, in 1950.) After receiving a certificate, she taught public school for a few years. But it was the Depression, and a university degree promised better job security.

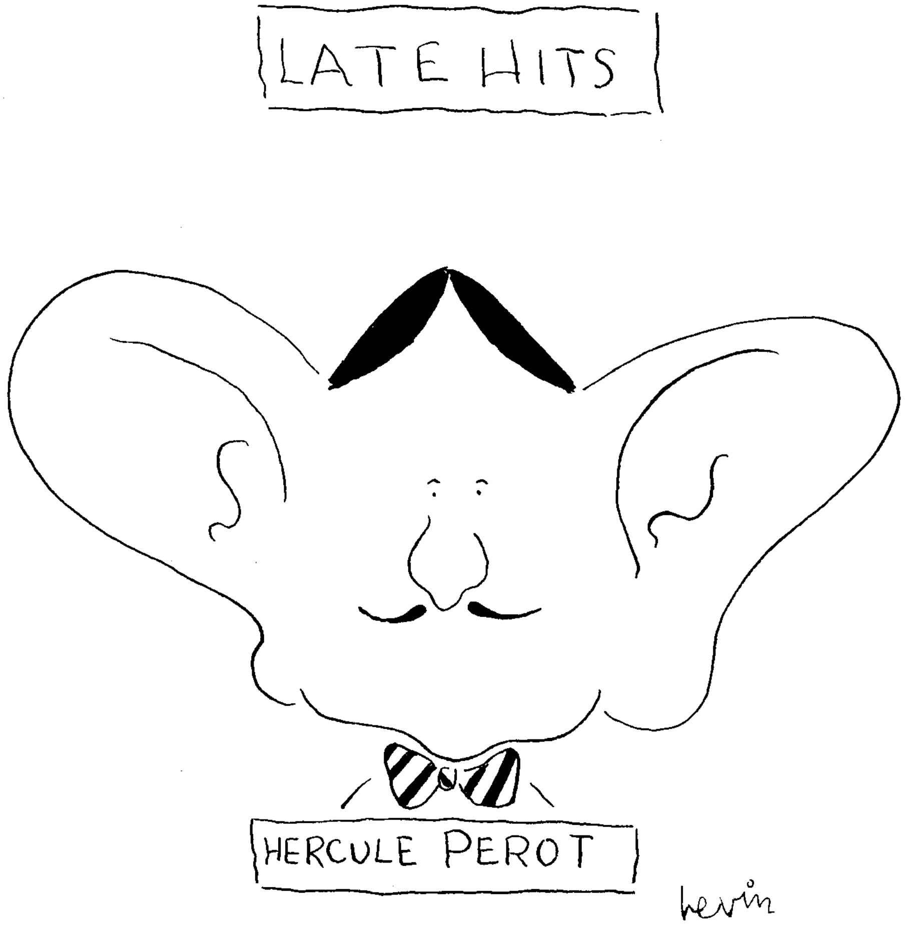
"I asked everybody what was the best university," she recalls. "I thought I might as well go to the best. They told me Columbia." So in the fall of 1941, a few months before Pearl Harbor, she started classes at Columbia University Teachers College. She had also found a new vocation. "I saw all the paintings in all the museums. Then I thought, If you could possibly be a painter and earn a living—which you can't," she adds, laughing—"then I would like to be a painter. That's when I started painting." She supported herself with a series of odd jobs, most of which she describes as "disciplinarian." For example, she was put in charge of forty "unruly" boys who waited tables at the main university dining room. "They never gave *me* any trouble" she says.

In 1946, having received her B.S. degree, she headed west, and enrolled in the Art Department of the University of New Mexico, in Albuquerque. "I would keep going to school to have use of a studio," she explains. During the next few years, she moved between Albuquerque and the university's summer session in Taos; moved back to New York and Teachers College (this time for an M.A.); then moved west again, to teach at Eastern Oregon State College. It was while Martin was living in Albuquerque that she and Georgia O'Keeffe became friends. When she visited O'Keeffe, in the newly built Abiquiu house, Martin usually stayed for several days. Sometimes she brought along a friend, another graduate student and painter. "O'Keeffe gave him a hard time, tormenting him the way she did all young men," she says.

On one occasion, the three talked about going around the world on a freighter. As they discussed the trip, O'Keeffe got more and more excited. "It was exhausting. Georgia was like that—very intense and exciting to be with, but she drained me," Martin says. "When she left the room for a few minutes, I just had to lie down, right then and there." The voyage didn't take place. "I never could have found the money," Martin explains. O'Keeffe, though, was already very well off. "Georgia was crazy about decorating. She would decorate and redecorate the Abiquiu house. I used to stay in a room with a Marin painting, and all the colors in the room—the bedspread and pillows—were chosen to match the colors in the Marin."

In the mid-fifties, Martin settled in Taos. The town's glory days as an artists' utopia were over, but two legendary figures of the D. H. Lawrence era were still tottering about: Mabel Dodge Luhan, referred to in the local press as the "Regent of New Mexico," gave regular luncheons for hungry artists at Los Gallos, her curious International Style Hispano-Indian adobe hacienda; and Lady Dorothy Brett—painter, daughter of the peerage, and Lawrence groupie supreme—held forth in her house (now a restaurant) just outside of town. There were great impromptu parties, redolent of the twenties.

"I decided I would paint even if I starved," Martin says. Happily, Taos was



still cheap. “I had what I thought was a pretty good studio for only fifteen dollars a month,” she recalls. She had started out painting landscapes, flowers, and portraits. “I did a pretty good portrait of an Indian girl,” she says, and she promises to show me a photograph. (Somehow, I know I'll never see it.) As an instructor at the university, Martin taught portraiture, drawing, and design. She was least satisfied with the landscapes she was then making. “I used to paint mountains here in New Mexico and I thought my mountains looked like ant hills,” she wrote.

In the mid-fifties, Martin moved further toward abstraction. Her few surviving works from this period combine biomorphic shapes, flat geometrical forms, and naturalistically rendered space (a window) in ways that suggest she had seen paintings by Arshile Gorky, Miró, and other Surrealists who had shown in New York during the forties.

Martin's attitude toward her early work is problematic. She destroyed most of it, and one feels that she would gladly make a bonfire of the rest if she could get her hands on it. Most abstract artists of this century, trained in an academic tradition, assume that their mature work speaks for itself. There is no evidence that Mondrian's renderings of flowers or Kandinsky's Art Nouveau landscapes were seen by their makers as anything other than stages in an evolutionary process. In contrast, Martin repudiates her early work in the evangelical tones of a repentant sinner. She did not grow from youthful emulation of others to a mature style of her own; she moved from darkness to light.

“I worked for twenty years becoming an abstract painter,” Martin says. “I never wanted to show my work.” (She did exhibit in Taos once, but only under duress, she claims.) “I never wanted to sell it, because it was not what I wanted, and I knew that it was not what I was *supposed* to be doing.”

WHEN the art dealer Betty Parsons saw Martin's work, in Taos in 1956, she, too, seemed to know what the artist was supposed to be doing. Parsons, accompanied by one of her painters, the Japanese-born Kenzo Okada, and his wife, was staying with Dorothy Brett. Martin visited Parsons there and asked if she wanted to see her paintings.

“I'd never done that before—I'd never wanted anybody to see my work before,” Martin says. “Very generously, Betty said she *did* want to see my paintings. And, even more generously, she bought enough of them so that I could go to New York. She would give me a show, she said, but only if I came to New York to live.”

Betty Parsons had opened her gallery, at 15 East Fifty-seventh Street, ten years earlier. In that decade, she emerged as the preëminent discoverer of new talent. Her artists were viewed as uncouth daubers even by her sophisticated colleagues, like Curt Valentin, who were used to the suave and literate symbolism of European Surrealists. In the immediate postwar years, Parsons represented Mark Rothko, Clyfford Still, Jackson Pollock, Barnett Newman, and Ad Reinhardt—most of the artists who would come to be known as the New York School. Then, in 1951, all but Reinhardt rose up in noisy insurrection. As Parsons herself freely admitted, she was no businesswoman: her record-keeping was haphazard, as were her efforts to promote her painters, or even to sell their work. She hated collectors and would often tell a potential buyer that she was too busy to show anything at the moment. But the defectors' non-negotiable demand concerned something else: they wanted her to stop showing rich amateur women artists who were also her friends, and to concentrate on them alone. Parsons refused. Rothko, Still, and Pollock, the triumvirate who also happened to be members of the first Abstract Expressionist generation, left.

Parsons' loyalty to her friends was also class loyalty—another irritant to the Marxist-professing painters, whose subtext clearly was that she choose sides. Elizabeth Bierne Pierson, descendant of one of the founders of Yale College, was not herself rich; her father, a banker, had lost most of the family fortune in the crash. But there had been enough left to send Betty to Miss Chapin's School, in New York, followed by Miss Randall McKeever's Finishing School. College was ruled out; her parents feared that it would encourage Betty's unfeminine side. Instead, she was indulged with art lessons in New York and Paris. Finally, at age nineteen, she married Schuyler Livingston Parsons, scion of a wealthy New York family. The marriage lasted less than two years. Betty turned to further study of painting and sculpture, and, eventually, to a career of representing young American artists whose discovery and nurture she felt to be her real calling. Her other life—the rich women friends with whom she summered abroad, and whom she visited on Colorado ranches and Maine islands—might be resented by those artists, but the friends (known as the Katinkas, a spelling variant of the comic-strip character Powerful Katrinka) were generous with loans and in buying paintings by artists whose work wasn't selling.

The two artists who stayed with Parsons, the so-called transition painters Ad Reinhardt and Barnett Newman, accepted Betty's other loyalties, and even habits of her class which had enraged the rebels. (Alone among art dealers, for instance, Parsons never came into the gallery on Saturdays—the day when Alfred Barr, the director of the Museum of Modern Art, was likely to visit. Fridays found her on the way to her house on Long Island.) Reinhardt, Newman, and Kenzo Okada, another loyalist, also understood that new talent was needed to invigorate Parsons' stable of artists. A small room, next to the large windowless main space, was named Section Eleven (for its actual address, next door) and readied to welcome Betty's latest discoveries.

Two young artists were already installed at Parsons' gallery when Martin arrived in New York from Taos, in 1957. Ellsworth Kelly, who grew up in Oradell, New Jersey, and Jack Youngerman, from Louisville, Kentucky, then fresh out of the United States Navy, had become friends in Paris. They had met at the École des Beaux-Arts, where, thanks to the G.I. bill, both were experimenting with large abstractions in primary colors. When Betty Parsons saw Youngerman's paintings in France, she made him the same proposal she had made to Martin: her gallery would show his work if he came to live in New York. She needed her artists here to “fight the

battle where it's taking place," she told him.

Kelly, returning from Europe in 1954, was in the vanguard of Parsons artists who found cheap living and working space in the abandoned nineteenth-century warehouses, gasworks, and ship chandlers' lofts of Coenties Slip. In 1956, when Jack Youngerman arrived in New York with his wife, the beautiful French actress Delphine Seyrig, and their infant son, Duncan Pierre, "Kelly was the first person I saw," he says. The Youngermans moved into a house a couple of blocks down the Slip, joining another artist friend—Robert Clark, soon to enjoy greater fame as Robert Indiana. When Martin first arrived in the city, she lived with Betty Parsons in her airy studio at 143 East Fortieth Street. Youngerman remembers Parsons' "bringing Agnes down one evening to introduce her. It was in Ellsworth's loft." Soon afterward, Agnes moved downtown, she recalls, "to be with Betty's artists."

"Senility is looking back with nostalgia," Martin has written, yet she allows herself to become nostalgic when she talks about Coenties Slip: "It was a great place to live, because, for one thing, you could go on the Staten Island ferry before breakfast—it was just a block away." There were also free rides on the tugboats moored on the dock across the street. And, everywhere, spectacular views of the East River and the Brooklyn Bridge. "I had a hundred-foot-long loft," Martin says. "It had two skylights and fourteen-foot ceilings with great beams, and at the end of every beam you could see daylight. But it was cold. So I had a big heater blowing that used to be in a garage. It was quite economical. When you moved into a loft, you had to put everything in—the plumbing, the kitchen stove. But on the Lower East Side you could buy anything you needed real cheap, because it's so hard to throw things away in New York. I found a bathtub with long legs and claws. I had to put it somewhere, so I put it in the bedroom."

Lenore Tawney, a weaver and fabric artist, had moved to the Slip from Chicago, arriving shortly before Martin. Tawney's loft was heated with a coal stove, and Robert Indiana worried about the safety of her loft's ventilation. "He wanted me to have a pipe that went up and out through the ceiling," Tawney recalls. "So he went and had one made. He and Agnes were putting it up together when Bob fell from the top of a tall ladder. I remember Agnes standing there and saying, 'He just floated down.' "

Martin's fearlessness, if not her levity, made a deep impression on Ellsworth Kelly. "I was struck by the way she never locked her door," he says. "The Seamen's Church Institute was on the Slip. There were lots of drunken sailors around at night—many of them weren't working. It wasn't that safe. I remember thinking, Boy, she's very brave, never to lock her door." Kelly was drawn to Martin by other affinities: "Artists can be very aggressive and competitive, and they can be loners—hard to get close to—except for confrontational occasions. Bob Indiana, for example, was a good friend, and amusing, but he could be very caustic. Agnes wasn't like that. She was a very spiritual person, of great sensitivity. I was very quiet and shy in those days. If you spoke to me, I could just about answer. New York was a foreign place for me. I missed Paris. She was a nature lover, and I was, too. So we went around together. With the first pictures I sold, I bought a little VW, and we would go to Jacob Riis Park." With the others, they went camping on the Jersey shore, sleeping in tents or on the beach. "My early work—no one else, except Parsons, could appreciate what I was doing then. Agnes appreciated it right away," Kelly says.

Their art, he adds, shares a "love of the anonymous, of doing the work. The work itself is what's important. We don't want our personality in the art. We all had to get over Picasso, because his was 'great personality' art. For Abstract Expressionists, gesture was very important—we were trying to get away from the 'I,' as in 'Look how well *I* do it.' Then, there's a stillness that we appreciate in each other's work, as in a common destiny."

Martin's exaltation of "egoless" abstraction, of detachment, humility, and surrender, is related to her interest in the writings of Chuang-tzu and Lao-tzu, Chinese philosophers of the Tao. In the nineteen-fifties, Taoism, or the Silent Way of Recompense, and Zen, Taoism's Japanese adaptation, gained adherents among artists and intellectuals, through the translations, writings, and lectures of T. Z. Suzuki and Alan Watts. Artists as diverse as John Cage, Allen Ginsberg, and Ad Reinhardt (who also became Martin's friend) were all proponents of Zen. Chance, the element of Zen that Cage, among others, found so aesthetically fertile, is of no interest to Martin. She is withering about Cage's music, and about the work of musical modernists in general. "He dropped a piece of string and then he made a pattern from it, and then he made it into music. But that's just by chance—it's not composition," she says severely. "He just takes string and drops it on the floor; you can't call that music. Not like Beethoven, where every note is composed." Yet, despite her extreme cultural conservatism, "Agnes's work is true Tao," Youngerman observes, speaking of "her sense of identification with the whole of being, instead of with one's particularity—to live as the ocean rather than as the bubble of foam on the ocean." Martin herself has written, "My paintings have neither object nor space nor line nor anything—no forms. They are light, lightness, about merging, about formlessness, breaking down form. You wouldn't think of form by the ocean. You can go in if you don't encounter anything."

Taoism as Martin sees it is also related to therapeutic precepts for living: *an ideal of emptiness, in the sense of eliminating* desire and renouncing egotism—the source, in her view, of all suffering. "Ego makes us feel guilty," she told me. "If you sit down for a minute, ego is after you, telling you, 'You're a good-for-nothing.' No matter what you do, no matter what you accomplish, ego says, 'You're short.'"

Denunciations of pride and intellect thread her conversation and writings ("The intellectual is in fact death," she has written). Lenore Tawney recalls studying Christian devotional texts with Martin. "We read 'The Lives of the Saints' together: St. John of the Cross, St. Teresa d'Avila," Tawney says. "Of course, we couldn't hope to emulate them, but we could be inspired."

Barnett Newman and his wife, Annalee, met Martin shortly after she arrived in New York, and they were both struck by her. "She wasn't poetic-looking at all," Annalee Newman says. "There was something about her very being that was poetic." Before Martin's first one-woman show opened, on December 2, 1958, at the Betty Parsons Gallery, Parsons had sought Barnett Newman's help in launching her newest discovery, and he had been happy to give it. "Barney did everything he could for Agnes—first, because she was Betty's friend," Annalee Newman recalls. "He went to parties Betty gave for Agnes. He brought friends. He talked to other people about her work, and, right from the beginning, he hung all her shows. Barney had a terrific eye for new young talent, and he recognized Agnes's possibilities. But he wouldn't have done all that if Betty hadn't made it clear how important Agnes was to her."

That show and another, the following year, attracted respectful attention from reviewers. The only trace elements of naturalism in Martin's art now were the titles of the works—"Wheat," "Tideline," "Earth," "Buds"—along with a palette reflecting a spectrum of earth colors. In the first exhibit, the pale canvases on which squares and rectangles appeared to float suggested to the critic Dore Ashton that "the sands of the desert seem to have impregnated her imagination."

Statements by the artist confirmed the symbolic hold that the West retained on her imagination: "The land is effective there. Isn't there something ecological about painting?" In the second exhibit, deeper tones dominated: slightly blurred forms of dark sienna all but merged with a ground of black-brown. Memories of mesas seemed to have been colored by the art that Martin had encountered in the intervening year—in particular, the sombre harmonies of Mark Rothko.

Martin concedes that her art changed radically after she moved to New York, but she dismisses, at first, the possibility that seeing is becoming. "I don't believe in influence," she says. "The thing is, if you're influenced, you stop right there. You simply can't go on. You have to go

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ENTIRE LIVES

If only the simple indigenes of the place disported themselves
in heathenish ways, and were like children, were degenerated
progeny of Adam, then it would be in the name of Christ that
they'd be made to work their fields for the Crown—and
lo! they were, upon investigation, simple, and like children,
and denatured sons of Adam since Biblical days. How
well things work. How slyly beautifully the past
condones the moment. If only they this, if only
they that. If only my uncle touched me, here, and even
here, when I was young, if only my mother drank and
walloped me with the waffle iron, then you'd understand
I'm not responsible for this dangerous weather
storming around my head: the sudden floods, the falling rocks,
of getting to know me. In Victorian novels, narrative

is the logic of causation: once
upon a time there was a violent rending of moral order.
An infant is abandoned in the dust mounds; or
two newborn babes are switched at birth; or one night
in the rookery an innocent serving girl is seduced . . .
Whatever the wound, its stain appears 800 detailed pages later,
vengeances and curses and legacies shaping—in fact
explaining—entire lives. A friend of mine is up all night
in the nineteenth century, energetically touring its topiaried estates,
and the dike-workers' wattle huts in the marshlands, and
the gypsy camps, and the barristers' inner chambers . . .
There's some problem of a birthmark: though a problem
with an origin and a culmination, comforting
to that extent; exterior; nameable; blameable. But eventually the light

of the twentieth century, the late and frazzled drag-end of the century,
occludes the candles of Abbotshire and Chumley-in-the-Dingle, and
their place in an elaborate linkstitch pattern. Another
day of "real life" begins, and she faces into its pummel of unsolvable
mysteries. Is there a God? or no God? and in either instance how and why
are we here at all, and is there a Final Edge, and what's beyond it?
She sits at the window and watches the random drift
of the planet's dander winking in the weak and early sun.
What physics says is that we're elements (a little) mixed
in emptiness (a lot)—is it true? does it really describe
her hand she turns for study in this light, her hand
that's slapped a face, that's slept around a penis? is it
only densed-up air? is there a Purpose? are the lizard-selves
we once were still alive in us? . . . That afternoon,

in her therapist's office, several questions backtrack
to her childhood. A part of her is five and half-remembering/
no, inventing / no, remembering / now there isn't any difference/
monstrous things. The part that's thirty-five blushes,
yes, then makes a momentary imagistic linkup
to a blush-red birthmark suddenly revealed
in a lawyer's rooms in Abbotshire: 800 busy pages
of deceptions and misapprehensions suddenly take regulated
shape, are given history, which is something like being given
a reason for having turned out this way at all. If only . . .
The therapist reaches into a mossy cavern . . . reaches and
lo!—into the tar and the bone-pit, into
the boggy deep . . . Her uncle is moaning,
her mother is swinging the iron in its dark wonderful arc.

—Albert Goldbarth

on, on your own, or there's no place to go." Yet in describing her relationship to the Abstract Expressionists she says, unhesitatingly, "I consider myself one of them. They had a whole philosophy. They gave up positive and negative space, and, as a result, they got tremendous scale in their work, and they didn't do it gradually. They moved in one step to complete nonobjectivity. They dealt directly with those subtle emotions of happiness that I'm talking about." Only what Martin calls "abstract emotions" can be the subject of art. Other feelings—anguish, terror, grief—and any violent impulses are inadmissible. "I don't believe that's art," she says. "I don't believe in negative art." None of the artists Martin admires—and with whom she identifies—have any "negative content" in their work. Pollock expressed "ecstasy"; Rothko was moving toward "perfect innocence."

Establishing a community of belief and objective with these artists allows her to acknowledge their tutelary role in her art. "If there is such a thing as influence, I've been terribly influenced by the Abstract Expressionists," Martin says. Harold Bloom's "anxiety of influence" was observed by at least one friend who saw her work. Chryssa, the Greek-born conceptual artist and sculptor, was in her mid-twenties when she regularly visited the Coenties Slip studio.

"I would see two or three paintings that I would like, but they would have already been rejected by Agnes," Chryssa says. "When you paint a surface by hand, with thin transparent coats, naturally the brush will leave certain textures. For her, these textures could not be seen to have any relationship whatsoever with any other art. When art becomes that austere, everything matters."

Jack Youngerman noticed a "major shift in Agnes's art" as a result of her encounter with people like Reinhardt, Newman, and Kelly. "Remembering the paintings that Betty brought from Taos and knowing what Agnes has done since then is always, for me, an extraordinary example of how art has to do with confrontation, not isolation," he says. Confronting the other Parsons artists "triggered what we think of as Agnes's work, which, of course, was *latent*," he adds. "And what was true for Martin was true for all of them. Rauschenberg said he was influenced by everybody. In a sense, that's true of all artists. It all comes out of that synthesis which you make between your original self and art history."

Despite good critical notices, Parsons' artists—especially the young arrivals in Section Eleven—were barely surviving. And, in the gallery's system of accounting, those who sold even a few pictures for a pittance would have to underwrite their own expenses, along with those of artists who didn't sell at all.

Ellsworth Kelly's first one-man show was in 1956. After the opening, Parsons told him that she had sold two small paintings for seventy-five dollars each. She explained that since the ads she had placed in the *Times* and the *Herald Tribune* had each cost that amount, she and Kelly were now even.

Following a good sale of paintings from her shows, Martin would get quarterly statements from Parsons showing that "after expenses for moving, storage, publicity, et cetera, I owed *her* money," she recalls. "I just couldn't live on what I was getting from Betty." In 1960, Martin exhibited in three group shows, but not at Parsons. The following year, she had her last show at the Betty Parsons Gallery.

In life as in art, Martin's directives, she says, come not from conscious decisions but from a particular source of inspiration. "Every morning for two and a half years, I asked my mind if I could change galleries, and for two and a half years it said, 'No, no, no.' Finally, it said, 'Yes.' I leaped out of bed, went uptown, and told Betty Parsons I was leaving."

That year also marked the beginning of a new and fruitful direction for Martin's art—the grid paintings. Parsons saw in their delicate lacing of lines "heartstrings pulled out, endlessly."

A photograph taken in 1958 by Hans Namuth shows the Coenties Slip tenants on the roof of their building. The group forms a rough pyramid, with Ellsworth Kelly, taking a drag from his cigarette, standing at the apex. Off to one side, Delphine Seyrig, her delicate features framed by a mop of dark hair, sits dreamily, knees drawn up. At the center, Duncan Pierre Youngerman, not quite two, stares solemnly at the camera, flanked by a crouching Robert Indiana and by his father, looking like a skinny, thatch-haired teen-ager. Agnes Martin, seated above Youngerman on a sloping section of roof, gazes down at the others, hands in her raincoat pockets. At forty-six, she was more than a decade older than the rest, and her elevated position in the photograph suggests both distance and benevolent authority.

In talking of the Slip, Martin recalls more solitude than community. Unlike her friends, she remembers no outings with others. "We all went to Prospect Park, but we all went alone, on different days," she says. That kind of separateness, Jack Youngerman feels, was a characteristic of the Coenties Slip artists. There was always "this envelope of private space, with no merging of intimacies," he says. "We were a group of solitudes." He makes a telling contrast between "us" and "them"—the Abstract Expressionist artists to the north, whose lives and loves have become mythologized. When people talk about that period now, they think that it all took place at the Cedar Tavern and the Artists Club—"warmer, more promiscuous, with that macho closeness, fuelled by alcohol," Youngerman says. "None of the people on the Slip were like that. Agnes wasn't, either, and I think that's why she was more comfortable down there than in other parts of the city. We were all a bunch of Protestants from the hinterlands, as opposed to warm New York Jewish people, like Rothko and Newman." (Uptown, the more emotionally expressive ethos didn't provide any protection from self-destructiveness and despair: Jackson Pollock was killed in a drunken-driving accident in 1956, and in 1970 Mark Rothko took his own life.)

Work—the sacredness of it—was also part of the Protestantism of their group, Youngerman says. Not even common concerns like the constant, nagging worry about how to pay the rent drew the loners together.

Unable to establish a career in America, Delphine Seyrig went back to France, taking Duncan. Youngerman then moved into a loft adjoining Martin's new building, around the corner, on South Street. (No. 3-4 Coenties Slip, Martin's original studio, had been torn down a short time earlier.) But he never talked to her about his troubled marriage.

An awareness of the fragility of the lives around them acted to reinforce silence. Everyone was on the edge. One neighbor of the Youngermans, barely more than a boy, killed himself. Among the troubles that no one talked about, Youngerman recalls, were families and the inner conflicts that played out as the terrible burden of guilt created by present lives collided with the values and expectations of the past. Even among fellow-artists at that time there was "a strong sense of exclusion," Youngerman says, a sense that some people didn't fit in, because of personality, race, or sexual orientation. More than thirty years separates the silence that shrouded homosexuality in the nineteen-fifties and the determination to end that silence, given new impetus by the AIDS crisis and vocal expression by organizations like ACT UP. Although Youngerman applauds the end of some of the hypocrisy and suffering surrounding sexual "deviance" three or four decades ago, he still exemplifies the discretion and distance that characterized relations among the Coenties Slip artists. He was offended, he told me, by a recent symposium devoted to Betty Parsons.

"There was a lot of discussion about Betty's . . ." He stops, and the forbidden word hangs in midair for what seems a long time. "Betty's 'sapphic tendencies,' " he says. Parsons' lesbianism was, in fact, known to everyone who knew her—and to many who didn't. Yet recent history has done little to correct the double standard that makes it acceptable to acknowledge only gay men in public discourse. An interview with Ellsworth Kelly, for example, occasioned by his recent exhibition at the National Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C., referred to the artist's companion of many years, Jack Shear. But Betty Parsons, a gay woman who died in 1982, and her lovers are still unmentionable as such.

From 1961 on, Martin's friends and neighbors in Coenties Slip were aware that, periodically, her façade of stoicism and self-sufficiency crumbled, leaving her, as Youngerman describes it, in "an extremity of distress." But the conventions that governed their tight little community—respect for privacy, solitude, distance—served also to isolate and imprison her. Looked up to as an elder and a sage, admired for her discipline and courage, Martin would have found it impossible to ask for help. She has left eloquent testimony to her feelings of abandonment. "Helplessness, even a mild state of helplessness, is extremely hard to bear," she wrote. "Moments of helplessness are moments of blindness. One feels as though something terrible has happened without knowing what it is. One feels as though one is in the outer darkness or as though one has made some terrible error—a fatal error. Our great help that we leaned on in the dark has deserted us and we are in a complete panic and we feel that we have got to have help. The panic of complete helplessness drives us to fantastic extremes, and feelings of mild helplessness drive us to a ridiculousness. We go from reading religious doctrine and occult practices to changing our diet. Or from absolute self-abasement or abandonment to every known and unknown fetish. . . . The feeling of calamity and loss covers everything. We imagine that we are completely cut off and tremble with fear and dread."

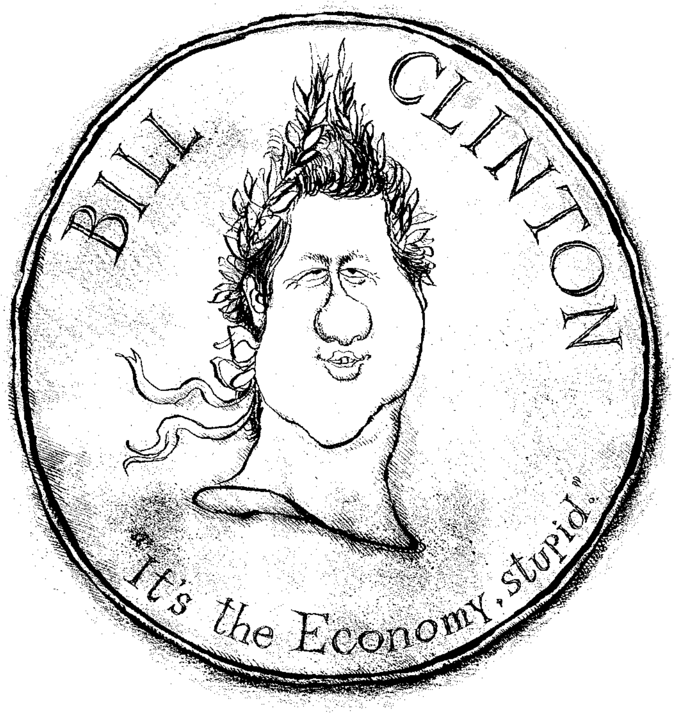
Martin's descents into uncontrollable panic happened, apparently, without warning. There were none of the worrisome signals of distress that might have alerted friends to oncoming crises—no visible slide into melancholy, no crescendo of excitability. Moreover, the distance that she required—a larger "envelope of private space" than was the norm on the Slip—allowed her rigid defense system to be taken as an objective state. Agnes was fine—until she wasn't. Then friends would be summoned. When it was over, nothing had happened.

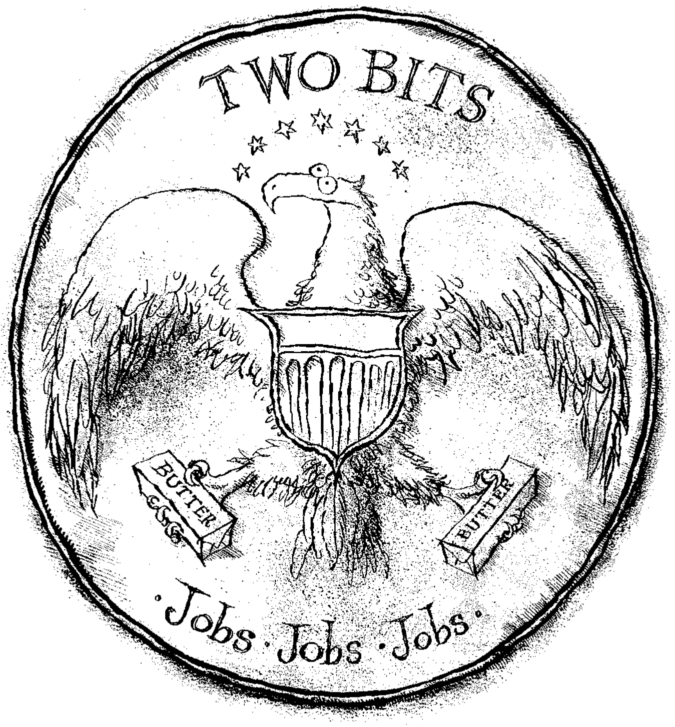
BY 1964, Martin had managed to earn enough from two shows at the Elkon Gallery to plan a trip around the world, but she had barely arrived in Bombay when she got sick. She spent a month and a half in the hospital there and then came home. "I didn't get

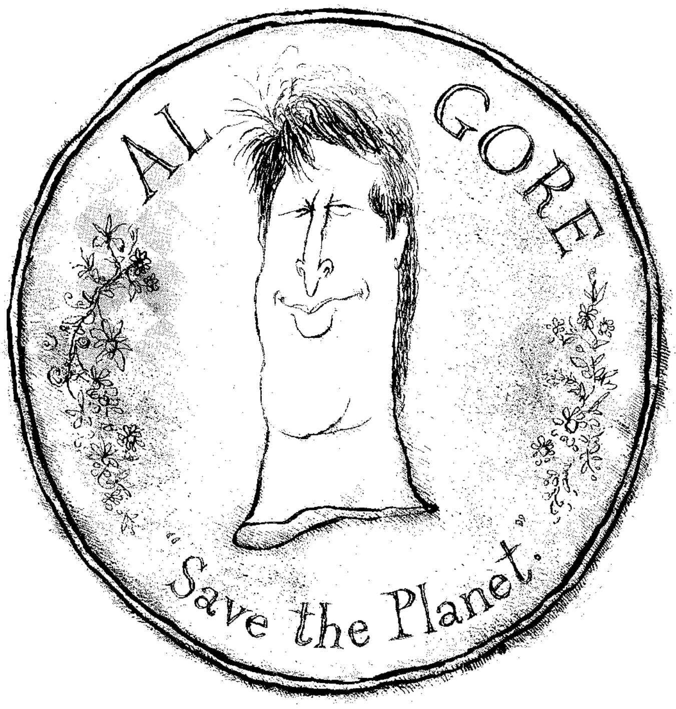
ARTIST'S NOTEBOOK BY RONALD SEARLE

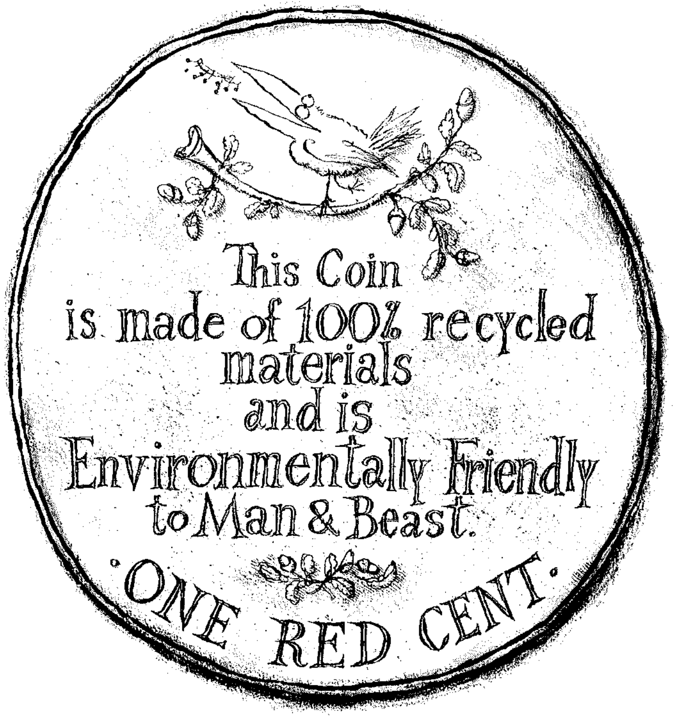
COINS OF THE REALM

SINCE the fourth century B.C., when young Philip of Macedon leaped onto the throne, and captured the richest gold mines in southern Europe to boot, winners have traditionally and eagerly celebrated their triumphs by striking coins in their own honor, usually in gold. Here are a couple of suggestions, in slightly baser metal, for the Clinton-Gore White House.


BILL CLINTON
"It's the Economy, stupid."


TWO BITS
BUTTER
BUTTER
·Jobs·Jobs·Jobs·


AL GORE
"Save the Planet."


This Coin is made of 100% recycled materials and is Environmentally Friendly to Man & Beast.
·ONE RED CENT·

to look around much," she says dryly.

Then, in the summer of 1967, she left New York so suddenly that many friends were unaware that she had gone. A few days before she set out, she appeared, unannounced, at the old Pace Gallery, at 9 West Fifty-seventh Street. The director, Arnold Glimcher, has been Martin's friend and dealer now for eighteen years, but he did not represent her at the time. Glimcher was surprised to see her and astounded to learn why she had come. "She had brought all her art materials she could carry—brushes, canvases, stretchers—and asked me to give them away to young artists," Glimcher recalls. "Then she just disappeared."

Ellsworth Kelly and the Newmans were worried about her. Barnett Newman had been hearing reports that she seemed "out of control," Annalee Newman recalls—reports that made her friends more concerned about the furious haste of her departure during a week of sweltering heat.

"I didn't know where to go," Martin says. "So I drove around for a year and a half through America and the north of Canada." The account she gives is of a completely solitary journey. Lenore Tawney, however, recalls visiting Martin in Big Sur and then travelling with her to the Southwest: after spending some time exploring the spectacular coastal highlands, they headed for Flagstaff, Arizona, by way of Death Valley and Las Vegas. When they reached Flagstaff, Tawney returned East, leaving her friend to push on to the Grand Canyon. During this period, Martin made no art at all. Instead, "I meditated. I searched for the truth. I search for the truth all the time, but I gave it extra time then," she says, with a grin. "Almost two years, alone. It's hard to be alone."

Then Martin had a vision of adobe, guiding her to New Mexico. When Martin talks about her visions, or about voices that command her, she never sounds exalted—or, for that matter, visionary. There's no suggestion of an otherworldly or altered state. She seeks directives and eventually receives them: when to leave her dealer, where to live, what to paint. ("I had a vision of a grid and I painted it," she says.)

Martin returned to the East from time to time, to see close friends. In April of 1968, she accompanied Betty Parsons to Bennington College for an exhibition in memory of Paul Feeley, another Parsons artist. Returning West, Martin stopped at a gas station in Cuba, New Mexico, about three hours' drive from Santa Fe. She asked the manager if he knew of anyone with land outside town—land that had a spring on it. His wife owned land with a spring, the man said. As soon as she saw the place, a remote mesa called Portales, six miles wide and eight miles long, she rented it with a lifetime lease, paying ten dollars a month for fifty acres.

Besides the spring, her new property had one tumbledown structure. She propped up the center pole and made the building livable while she built the rest of her compound.

"First, I built a little house, then I built a bigger house, then I built a three-car garage," she says. "Then I built a mushroom house. Then I found out you can't grow mushrooms in New Mexico—when the spore comes on, it dries out. I failed."

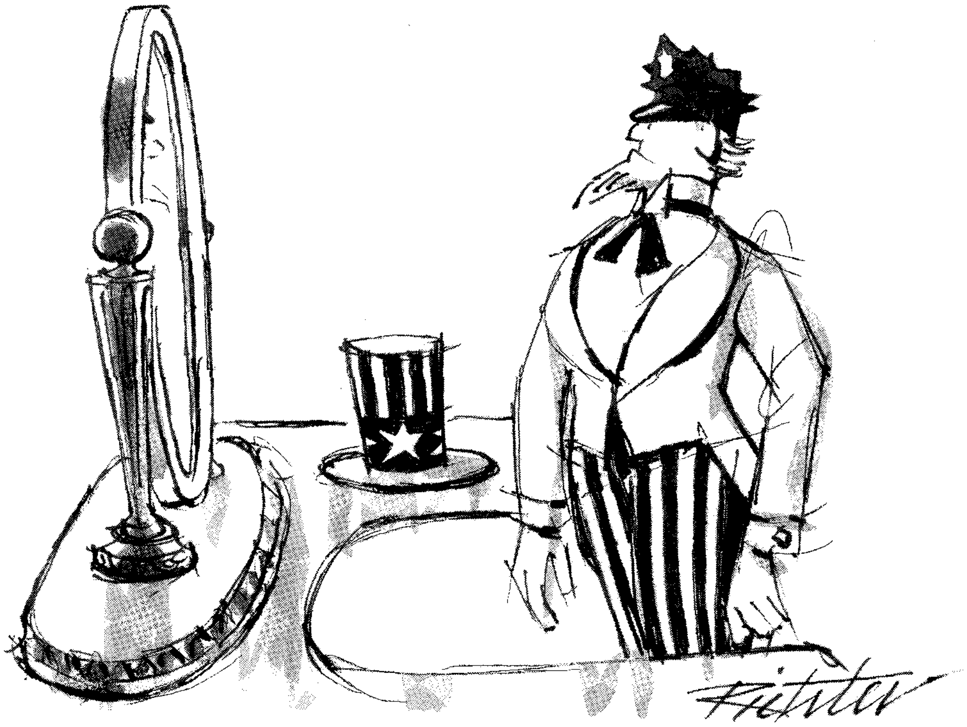
A young sculptor, Elyn Zimmerman, visited the mesa in the early nineteen-seventies. Driving through the blasting heat, she arrived wearing cutoffs. Martin took one look at the shortened jeans and demanded that her guest remove them and give them to her. Startled by the request, Zimmerman nonetheless complied. Martin took the cutoffs and disappeared into the house. When she returned, they had been transformed. "She had one of those old-fashioned treadle sewing machines," Zimmerman recalls, "and she hemmed the frayed edges and dangling threads into perfectly straight seams." Zimmerman found conditions on the mesa more primitive than

CHILDHOOD HOUSE

After our mother died, her house, our
childhood house, disclosed
all its deterioration to our eyes.
While living she had screened us from, or we hadn't seen,
the termite-nibbled floorboards and the rotting beams;
the wounded stucco hidden by shrubbery; the frayed,
unpredictable wiring, and the clanking labor
of the hot-water line into the discolored
tub; the fixtures in the dining room
skewed and malfunctioning.

I remember thinking with a
swarm of confusion that this was the true state
of our childhood now: this house of dilapidated girders
eaten away at the base. Somehow I had assumed
that the past stood still, in perfected effigies of itself,
and that what we had once possessed remained our possession
forever, and that at least the past, our past, our child-
hood, waited, always available, at the touch of a nerve,
did not deteriorate like the untended house of an
aging mother, but stood in pristine perfection, as in
our remembrance. I see that this isn't so, that
memory decays like the rest, is unstable in its essence,
flits, occludes, is variable, sidesteps, bleeds away, eludes
all recovery; worse, is not what it seemed once, alters
unfairly, is not the intact garden we remember but,
instead, speeds away from us backward terrifically
until when we pause to touch that sun-remembered
wall the stones are friable, crack and sift down,
and we could cry at the fierceness of that velocity
if our astonished eyes had time.

—ERIC ORMSBY



she had expected: there was no telephone and no electricity; rainwater was collected for drinking; water for household needs had to be pumped. She had hoped to meet Georgia O'Keeffe, whose Abiquiu house was a few mesas away from Cuba. But O'Keeffe had by now become a nonperson. "Agnes wouldn't even mention O'Keeffe by name," Zimmerman says. "She was 'the woman over the hill.' "

With the help of Bill Katz, a young designer friend from New York, Martin began building a huge log studio. Her work rules were severe. She told Katz, "You'll never amount to anything if you can't concentrate for eight hours, and that means no going to the bathroom, no taking a break."

When the studio was finished, Martin started painting again. For her large compositions, she kept the earlier dimensions, six by six—"a size you can walk into," she says—but she now worked mostly in acrylic, a medium she had begun using in the late nineteen-sixties. Floated on canvas, acrylic's matte iridescent glow illuminates the broad vertical bands of pink and mauve in Martin's works from this period.

One day in the mid-nineteen-seventies, Martin reappeared in New York and made her way to the Pace Gallery's new space, at 32 East Fifty-seventh Street. "I was stunned to see her," Glimcher recalls. She wanted the gallery to show her new works, she told him. Three weeks later, back in New Mexico, she telephoned and invited Glimcher to visit her in Cuba; she would pick him up at the airport in Albuquerque. When he arrived and walked into the studio, one of the new pink pictures was standing on the easel. Directly above, the deep rose of a New Mexico sunset shone through a double bank of windows. "That was quite a sight," he recalls.

Following a speaking engagement at Cornell in the early nineteen-seventies, Martin had visited Ellsworth Kelly. "She came to see me in the country," Kelly recalls. "I met her at the station in Hudson. She got out of the train and said, 'I just came to say thanks. Now I can go back to New York.' " Kelly explained that her train wasn't going to the city. "You'll have to stay awhile," he told her. Reluctantly, she spent the night. "I understood that she didn't need to have a long visit," Kelly says. "She just wanted to touch base, hold hands, as a way of hearing me say, 'Yes, you *are* working. You *are* going ahead.' "

In 1973, Martin gave a talk in Philadelphia in conjunction with the one-woman exhibition of her work organized by Suzanne Delehanty, the progressive curator of the Institute of Contemporary Art. The exhibit had been underwritten by the family foundation of Daniel W. Dietrich II, a scholarly young collector and philanthropist. He had already acquired an important collection of Thomas Eakins paintings, drawings, photographs, and manuscripts, to which he had begun adding works by other American artists from Albert Pinkham Ryder through Ad Reinhardt.

Dietrich and his wife, Jennie, made their first purchase of a work by Martin in 1970: "Play II" is a white painting whose glazed surface seems to skim just above an underpinning of white lines. The Dietrichs are serious students of Buddhist thought, and when they describe "experiencing Martin's painting" for the first time, they speak the language of religious converts. "Her work is deeply involved in a prayer for the wellness of all things," Jennie Dietrich says. Visiting Martin on the mesa confirmed their sense of her as a sage, whose exemplary life and teachings illuminate their own quest, and whose qualities they see as peculiarly American. "There's a spiritual spine to the work, and a lot of guts," Daniel Dietrich says. "You can look into it as deeply as you can go and there's no artifice; it's honestly made." They quote Martin in rejecting the word "mysticism" as "too fragile and wispy," adding, "We see Agnes's work as very grounded, rooted in reality, very hard-won."

In the late nineteen-seventies, Martin lost her property on Portales mesa. "I had a lifetime lease from Mrs. Montoya," she says. "Then her brother came and said I was on *his* land. And I was. He had a ruthless lawyer, who said he would sue me for anything I took off. I lost a couple of trucks." According to Bill Katz, Martin certainly had been living and building on land that wasn't part of the fifty acres she had rented for ten dollars a month. And, just as certainly, by the time they were building the studio she knew that. "We figured, They may never, ever come out here," Katz says. "They could easily never have come out. It's just one of those risks you take."

Martin sought legal advice, she told me, but her lawyer informed her she didn't have a strong case to make. "You see, in this state you can't win against the Spanish people," is how she explains it. "The judges, the legislature, and everybody else are all Spanish. The Spanish are in the majority, and they very wisely keep all the political power." In fact, fewer than a third of the judges sitting on the New Mexico courts are of Hispanic origin. Martin's perception of herself as a victim of social and political conspiracy, of "them" prevailing against "us," was beginning to emerge as a dark theme in her life. "Agnes has problems with paranoia," an artist friend from New Mexico, Richard Tuttle, says. "Through the paranoia, she will hurt people, cut them off, not see them for years." Loving her requires determination, and Martin knows this. "I have no friends and you're one of them," she likes to tell each of the faithful.

"WHAT'S a 'misogynist'?" Martin asked me. "I've never heard that word before."

We were talking about the Abstract Expressionists and the perception that their heroic posture in art—the macho bonding in life, which included much boozing and womanizing—did not admit the possibility of women as fellow-artists. Together, we looked at a photograph accompanying an excerpt, in the *Times*, from Larry Rivers' autobiography. It's the famous image titled "The Irascibles," a group portrait of the painters who now constitute a pantheon of American art at mid-century. Of the fifteen artists in the photograph only one, Hedda Sterne, is a woman.

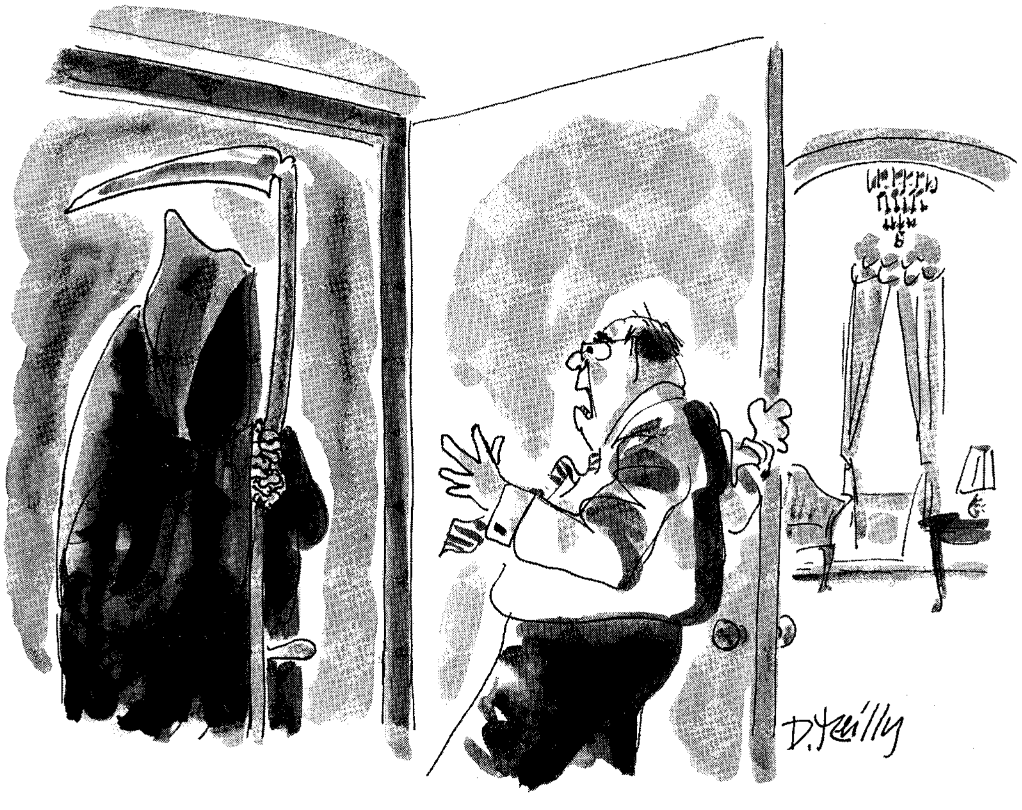
Martin contemplated the cluster of sombre-faced men in dark business suits. There was only one reason she could give for the solitary female presence. "There weren't any women artists," she said. Even now, according to her calculations, there are barely half as many women artists as men.

Feminism, whether as ideology or as program, mystifies her. "The women's movement failed. They aren't any more free than they ever were," she says. The third-person pronoun is not insignificant. Martin is dismissive of suggestions that there could be any feminist issues in art. She says she has had no experience of being discouraged, patronized, or excluded, nor does she know of any other women artists who have suffered from this treatment. "I don't think it has happened, either," she says. "I've had very good reviews of my work. It seems as though it was always seen and appreciated." Still, she acknowledges a crucial division separating certain women artists from their male counterparts. "Men artists can get married and go right on being artists. Women artists who get married don't have a chance," she says flatly.

That day, she wanted to know if I could tell whether her paintings had been made by a man or a woman. It was the only question—other than the one about the meaning of "misogynist"—that she asked me in many hours of conversation. She was pleased to hear that I would have found it impossible to guess her gender from her work. "I'm for keeping the field of art as it is, neither masculine nor feminine," she said.

Rejecting any validity to claims that women have differing experience as artists, insisting upon art as genderless, Martin makes a challenging subject for feminist criticism. Her reaction to one of the essays in the catalogue of the current Whitney exhibition was somewhere between outrage and amusement. She read me a passage from Anna C. Chave's article, comparing the Martin canvases to "the void of the womb." "Now, why does Barbara Haskell"—the curator of the exhibition—"want to publish stuff like that?" she said.

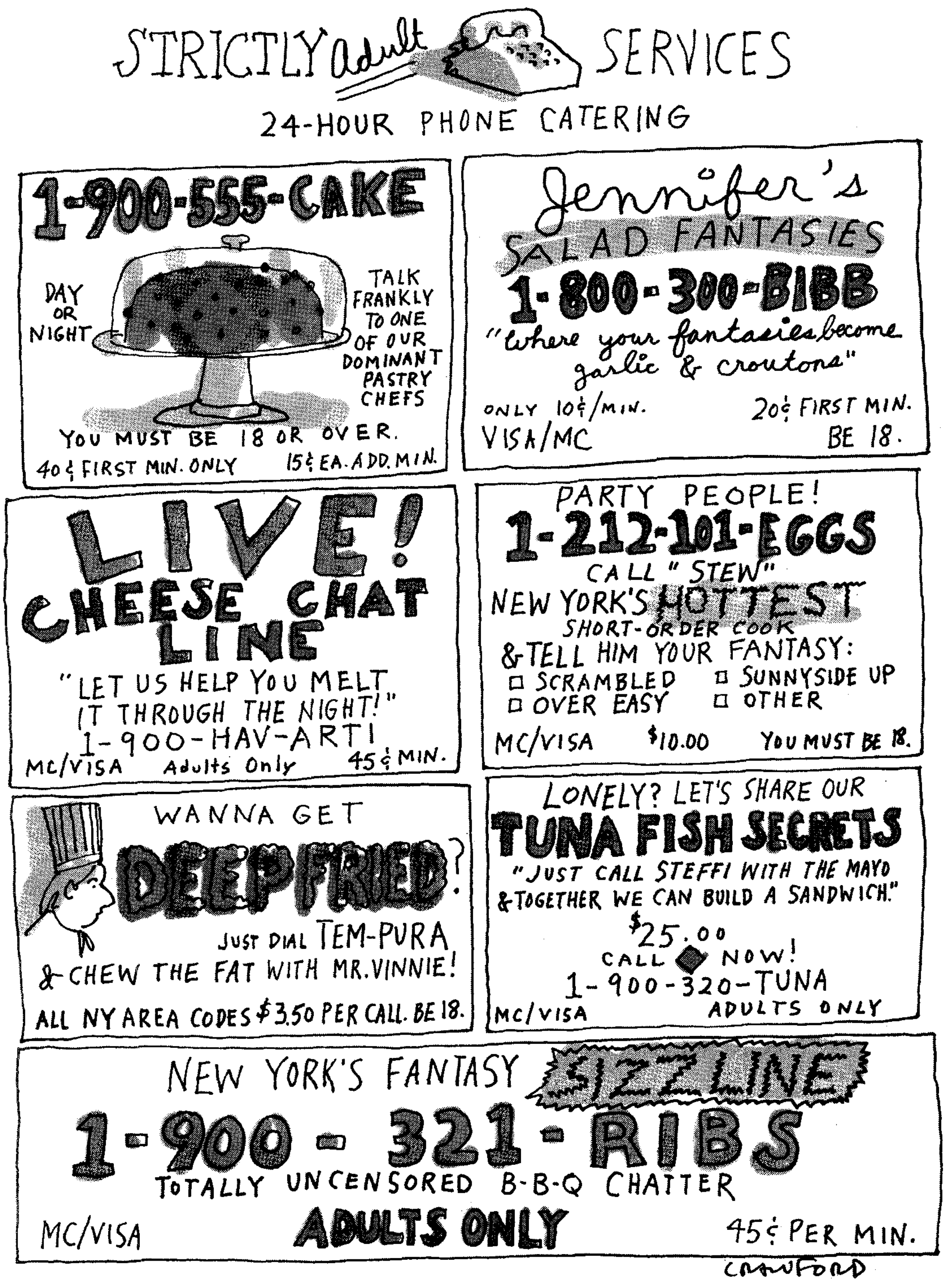
In addition to Haskell's own essay, "I got a lot of pressure to include other people," she says of the catalogue. "Today's political climate makes it impossible to present a single point of view."



"Not now—I've got to be around when Clinton falls on his face!"

WHEN Martin left her rented property on the mesa, she moved to Galisteo, whose patron saint is known as Our Lady of the Remedies. At the time she arrived, in 1978, Galisteo was a dusty Hispanic hamlet thirty minutes' drive from Santa Fe, across a vast sweep of grassy plain ringed in the far distance by the Sangre de Cristo, Jemez, and Ortiz Mountains.

She came with "absolutely nothing," she says. Not that she ever had much. "I think I can say I'm not materialistic. I have tons of money, though. Anybody that shows with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CRAWFORD

Arne Glimcher makes plenty of money, and I've made millions. It doesn't mean a thing to me. All I want is a good car." She glances toward a gleaming white BMW visible through a window.

In Galisteo, Martin set to work to re-create the mesa compound on a smaller scale. She built a studio, with a double bank of windows; a long, flat-roofed house, which was, in fact, her camper encased in adobe; and several outbuildings. Shortly, Galisteo itself became transformed. Other artists arrived, followed, inevitably, by the rich. Now the town boasts sprawling new adobe haciendas, with sculptor-designed iron gates, oasis-in-the-desert landscaping, and stickers announcing the owners' choice of alarm systems, including one that warns trespassers, "If I don't call the sheriff, my neighbor will." With less to protect, the remaining Hispanic residents live mostly on the other side of Route 41, their pockmarked adobe and cinder-block houses tumbling down the hill toward the road.

Martin chose not to accompany me when I visited her Galisteo compound. Her wrist was still too painful for the long car trip. After years of renting on the mesa, she had bought the property in Galisteo, and the security of ownership seemed to have eased the more recent move to the condominium. She was looking forward to working at her new studio, down the street. She can always go back to Galisteo if she wants to, she told me. Everything there certainly looked ready for her return; there was a Navajo blanket on a seat in a bow window of her house. Looking through the glass panes of the studio door, I could see a white easel fixed to the wall. From a distance, with the sun shining through the windows, the eight-by-eight-foot square could almost be a painting seen at her preferred time—early morning, in that moment she has described as "a burst of light."

On the long, east wall of the house, four large square windows look out on a stand of cottonwoods; the land drops away so suddenly that only the leafy branches of the trees can be seen. Far below, at the base of the tree trunks, is a graveyard of rusted car chassis, mattress springs, and unidentifiable metal parts of larger objects. From where Martin lived and worked for fourteen years, the wreckage is invisible. On a clear autumn day, she could see only rustling yellow leaves and, beyond, endless vistas of blue and lavender hills, paling into far-off mountains. ♦

FICTION

FRIEND OF THE FAMILY

BY KATHARINE WEBER

July 9

Well, Benedict,

A trout with its tail in its mouth. On a plate. Before me. It's called Truite au Bleu, and Victor insisted that I have it, that it was my obligation as a visitor to Geneva to have it, and so I did, but disconcerting as that was—do you know they boil them alive?—it paled beside the disconcertingness of attempting to dine in public with Anne and Victor.

Since I got here, three days ago, I've been feeling that I must have missed the first act. Where is the Anne Gordon with whom I lived in New York, happily, for more than a year in those two rooms on Eighth Street? Her letters didn't prepare me for this transformation. Her rhapsodies about the glories of Victor didn't prepare me for a balding Hungarian refugee more than twice her age. A married one, with three children. In just six months Our Lady of the Perpetual Milk Crate has evolved into I don't quite know what: a chic, jaded mistress person. Anne of Cleavage.

She has a very grownup modern flat, and this Victor about whom I have heard so much (and about whom I now realize I knew nothing) turns out to be, creepily, Anne's boss at U.G.P. (That solves the mystery of how Anne, working in the back room at the Shippen Gallery on Madison Avenue, was recruited by a Swiss oil broker, or whatever it is that U.G.P. is and does.) Victor is a "friend of the family," and has known Anne since she was little. Anne has reminded me that I did once meet him, when he came to pick her up at Eighth Street for dinner. I guess I vaguely recall some guy in a blazer, one of dozens of people from Eastern Europe who constitute a large group known to Anne as "friends of the family," standing in our hallway, winded after three flights of stairs. It didn't occur to me to notice him. It didn't occur to me in all these months that *that* was Victor. He even *looks* like "Daddy" (a dour Austrian baker with a flour allergy who lives alone with his bitter memories in deepest New Jersey), whose life Victor is credited with saving in a children's barracks (where they shared a bunk) at Auschwitz. Something about a potato.

To get to dinner, Anne and I took a bus to the outskirts of Geneva, and then walked for nearly a mile along a somewhat barren avenue where, believe me, nobody ordinarily walks. Anne had to walk in front of me because the traffic was so alarmingly close that walking together would have been dangerous. As it was, I thought it was dangerous. We picked our way along the shoulder of this road that was like a suburban Riverside Drive. Cars would rush past us, and I would feel the force of air pushing me, pulling me. Anne's skirt would swirl up. She has great legs. Walking a few paces behind her afforded me the same view that strangers in passing cars were getting.

There was something oddly seductive about her; she has a new walk that somehow exaggerates her femaleness in an almost cartoonish way. Is this how a mistress walks? She has very high-heeled strappy sandals. She walks very fast. I felt as though, compared to her, I was a sexless companion, like a dog or an old nanny, lumbering along faithfully behind her, steady as she goes. And I was wearing the blue sundress you like, which you always say looks so good with a bit of a tan. And let me tell you, I have quite a lot more tan than I meant to, because of yesterday's bizarre lake adventure.

Yesterday: Victor turned up unexpectedly, as Sundays are usually his family day, when Anne does things like bleach her mustache and (very painfully) wax her thighs. Anne had, in fact, spoken of such activities, but was, luckily, languishing over a piece of toast when the downstairs buzzer sounded with Victor's specially coded three shorts and one long. (Mrs. Beethoven: "What, Ludwig, me inspire you? Ha Ha Ha Haaa!")

Victor had been set free, he explained after an awfully long, silent greeting at the door; I kept my gaze tactfully averted while he and Anne did whatever it is that they do, with more passion than anyone else has ever experienced in the history of humankind. Victor's wife, Annamarie, had taken the children—who are called Lucien, Otto, and Minerva, if you can believe it—to the beach. As everyone apparently knows, Victor does not like going to the beach, for reasons that will be revealed presently.

Anne, who can be maddeningly passive in her dealings with Victor (how can this be Anne, the least accommodating person I have ever known; just try to argue with her about the pronunciation of *forte* or *banal*, just try to get her to go in the main entrance of the Metropolitan instead of her beloved Eighty-first Street side entrance for the cognoscenti), surprised me when she began to pout about how *she* never gets to go to the beach, how she should have rung up Annamarie (she has dinner there from time to time, and has baby-sat for them on three occasions) and finagled an invitation to join them if she had only known. (What beach, you might well ask. Some lakeside resort or other, with sandy beaches.)

I think she surprised Victor, too. He thought, perhaps, that he was calling her bluff when he said, "Oh, very well then, we go to the beach. Get your things. A towel. I cannot swim, though, because I have no swimming costume."

He sat at Anne's table with his hands placed palms up before him, as though he were old and weary and unable to do anything but acquiesce.

"We can buy you a suit at the chemist's on the corner—I've seen them there," Anne said. Victor looked helplessly at me. I didn't know what he wanted me to say. I remember when Anne patronized mere drugstores.

"You two should go," I began.

"No!" they chorused.

"I take so much of Anne's time from you, and you are her closest friend—it wouldn't be right to keep her for the whole Sunday," Victor said.

"There isn't much privacy at a beach

anyway," Anne pointed out, as if this were a practical observation. (They weren't going to fuck anyway? Something about this remark highlighted the illicit point of this whole alliance. It felt loaded with some sort of beyond obvious sexual *je ne sais quoi* I haven't grasped yet.)

So Victor's swim togs were acquired, and we were all heading off in his white Citroën toward some beach. What if we were to run into Victor's family, I inquired mildly from the back seat. I never know if it's O.K. to bring them up or not.

"We go to France," Victor says over his shoulder as he drives too fast down an access ramp and onto a highway without pausing, which causes the BMW closing in behind us in the near lane to swerve around the Citroën with a blaring horn and an obscene gesture from the driver.

"Nazi!" hisses Victor, who speeds up.

Anne puts her hand on his arm, and we drop back. "He had Stuttgart plates," she explains to me, turning her head so she can see me. I feel as though I'm out with somebody's parents.

I didn't have my passport with me, but Victor assured me that no one would check at the border, and he was right; we were waved through, Victor's white Citroën looking like an ambulance racing toward the scene of an accident. I'm in another country, I thought. I'm in France.

The lake was near the border, and we were there in minutes. For someone who doesn't swim, Victor seemed surprisingly well-informed about the whereabouts of this beach, where the parking lot was situated, where to change, and where the cold-drinks stand was.

We changed in a wooden shack. Victor went in after we came out (I feeling particularly thigh-conscious in my old black bathing suit; Anne looking terrific in a black bikini I would never have known her to wear in her former life), and emerged wearing his new swim trunks, his office-y white button-down shirt open. The swim trunks were an imitation-Hawaiian print that was like canned laughter. He was wearing his dark socks and thick-soled leather shoes. His legs were somehow pathetic and birdlike. The rest of him seemed more commanding and intense. I felt embarrassed for him when I glanced at his hairless shins.

We aligned ourselves on the sand with Anne between us. Victor took off his shoes and socks, and his shirt, which he folded into a fussy square for a pillow. Victor and Anne lay face down on their towels, with fingers linked. They both turned their heads away from me. I think their eyes were closed. I had the feeling that all the other people there knew what they wanted to do. I felt alone. I missed you, I wanted to have someone with me, too, so I wouldn't be the third wheel, and I hadn't brought a book. Damn. I sat up on my towel.

Nobody was swimming. It wasn't very hot. There were only a few other people around; no children at all. A woman several yards from us was sunbathing with the top of her suit pulled down to her waist. The woman sat very upright, partially facing in our direction in order to catch every ray of the sun, with her legs straight out in front of her. The posture emphasized her potbelly, and her nipples were like a second pair of eyes looking at me. I regretted the decision to leave my camera in the flat. I felt her glaring at me and realized I had been staring. I was glad I had left my camera in the flat.

I began to dig in the dry sand with one hand. I scrabbled out a rather large ditch that described the arc my arm could swing through freely without my changing position. I felt something under my fingers. It was a white plastic tampon applicator.

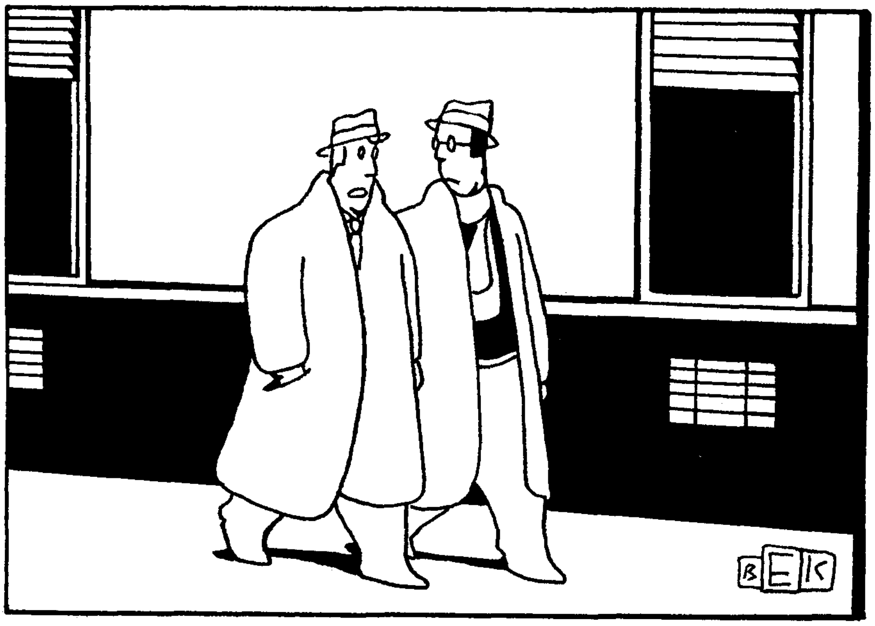
"A beach whistle," I observed to Anne, who had turned her head my way. She wrinkled her nose in distaste. I buried it near my feet, where I wouldn't disturb it again. Either these beachgoers were unusually tidy or the French comb this beach regularly, because there was very little interesting detritus. I would have expected to find Gauloise butts galore. I felt the edge of a shell as I was reinserting the tampon applicator in the sand. I examined the shell. It was nearly flat, somewhat oval, a thin yellow bit of translucency. It reminded me of the sort I used to find on the beach the summer I was six, when I spent two months with my mother and grandmother in Cornwall; it's a kind of shell I haven't seen since.

"Toenail, anyone?" I said, offering my find to Anne.

"Shut up, will you?" she said to me with surprising intensity. Was this a No Talking beach? I had no idea what the problem was.

"Yes, please, I would like a toenail," came Victor's voice. I had thought he was asleep. His head was still turned away. "Hello. I ordered the toenail. Make that ten. Could you deliver them right away?" This wasn't Victor's style, that I knew of. Maybe he kidded around much more with Anne when I wasn't there. I was momentarily confused.

"Here's one," I said, holding the shell out to him over Anne's head. She had lain back down on her towel and was squeezing her eyes tight shut. Nobody



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moved. My arm was still extended over Anne. Her back heaved, and I realized she was suppressing sobs. Victor's head was still turned away. His voice was weirdly disembodied.

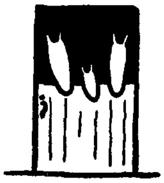
"Don't you have them ready for me?" he said languidly. I still didn't get it.

He rolled over and sat up.

"Anne is now upset with both of us," he announced. "She is upset with you for bringing up a bad subject. You did not know. She is upset with me for playing my little game with you. Isn't that right?"

Victor patted the top of Anne's head and stroked her shoulders. Something about her tears seemed to please him. He was now sitting up in the same doll-like position as the topless woman on my right. I saw his feet.

Benedict, I know human flesh cannot melt, but what I saw looked like the melted stubs of feet. Victor has no toes. They froze off at Auschwitz. The Allied doctors wanted to amputate his feet, but he wouldn't let them. (Anne told me all this when Victor went to get us cold drinks a little while later.)



The Pobble grinned at me. He saw me seeing his feet. I did not like his delight in my discomfort, in Anne's anguish.

"I'm sorry," I said, meeting his gaze.

"Of course you are," he said, rather nastily, I thought.

"Of course you wouldn't like to swim," sobbed Anne. "I didn't think."

"Of course you didn't, my pet," said Victor, smiling a cold smile.

We had been at the lake for about an hour, and we stayed there, more or less in silence, for another hour. It felt necessary to sit there so it wouldn't have been the upsetting discussion that made us leave, even though I doubt that I was the only one who felt like bolting for the Citroën. While Victor fetched Perriers with straws, and the Belgian mocha biscuits that he considers superior to all other forms of cookie life, Anne told me the story of Victor's toes, gazing out at the lake the whole time. I found myself imagining their sex life being somehow profoundly affected by this absence. What does he have her do to make up for it? As Victor struggled across the sand carrying the mineral water and the biscuits, I had to avoid studying his gait. He had put on his shoes and socks for the short walk. I wondered if his shoes had special toe weights that helped him walk. Even the sight of his fingers gripping the necks of the Perrier bottles was mildly surprising. I wondered if his toes had looked like his fingers. I curled and uncurled my own toes uncontrollably.

The drive back to Geneva was mostly silent. We all three of us had terrible sunburns.

"*Merde*," muttered Anne when she was through studying herself in Victor's rearview mirror. (I was relieved when she was finished, as I thought he might want to have the use of it on the highway.) "In the office tomorrow, how do we explain matching sunburns?"

"I went to the beach with my family, and you went to a different beach with your visiting friend," Victor answered.

"Thousands of people went to the beach today. Why worry about the coincidence of it?"

What a shit, I thought. A charming shit. With a sunburn. And no toes.

I'm sorry, Benedict, how did we get here? Right: Anne and I were walking along the side of the road on our way to the trout restaurant, she with her skirt flying and her sexy legs, I with my sunburn and in the blue dress you like. Anne had just reported over her shoulder that we were nearly there when a car skidded onto the gravel in front of us, giving me a serious scare. It was Victor's white Citroën.

"Would you like a ride?"

Anne played it as if he were a stranger. "No, thanks anyway. *Merci, non.*"

Victor waggled his eyebrows at me. I shrugged.

"Very well, ladies. *Ciao.*" He drove off. I could see his tail-light flash about a quarter mile up the road, and then the Citroën turned right and was lost from sight.

"It's better to arrive separately, in case anyone's there," she said over her shoulder.

"Anyone?"

"Any friend of Annamarie's. Any friend of the family."

"You're a friend of the family."

"Don't be dense," she said reprovingly. "It would be a disaster." She lingered over the word "disaster" the way some people savor the words "foie gras."

Although the Citroën had been in

the parking lot for ten minutes by the time we approached the maître d's pulpit, Victor was nowhere in evidence.

"We have a reservation for three?" Anne said in French. "The name is Goldfarb."

We were shown to a table in an elegant garden courtyard. It was early by Swiss standards, and we were the first customers of the evening. There were only five or six tables, all covered to the ground with snowy tablecloths, and very widely spaced across the white gravel courtyard. The tables were all big enough to seat eight or ten people. Ours had three place settings, at noon, four, and eight.

Anne and I picked up two wineglasses and moved together in the direction of the third. We sat down, leaving a place for Victor between us. This might seem like a small thing, but moments like that are what our friendship thrives on, has thriven on, that in-synch, "two thoughts with but a single mind" kind of instant, commonplace when we were roommates in New York but so rare since I've been here that I made a mental note of it.

A flurry of Bemelmans waiters rushed to rearrange the place settings. (What we had done was very naughty.) There was a stream running by, only a few feet from us, and the noise of it meant that we had to raise our voices slightly to converse, even after our rearrangement.

"So typical," said Anne. "So Swiss to seat us that way—so we use the table completely—with no thought to conversational distances."

"Or something. Maybe they don't like the idea of private conversations," I suggested. "And who is Goldfarb?"

"I thought you knew."

"Do I?" Did I?

"It was my father's father's name. Daddy changed it."

"Why?"

"Anti-Semitism, I suppose."

I thought of an imperious dowager of Scottish ancestry (and proud of it) called Peggy Gordon. I once heard her say to my grandmother, Gay, that she thought half the Gordons in New York were Jews who had changed their names from Goldfarb, Goldstein, and so on. "Why can't they just change it to Gold?" Peggy had asked plaintively. "It's shorter and neater, but you can still tell. I would

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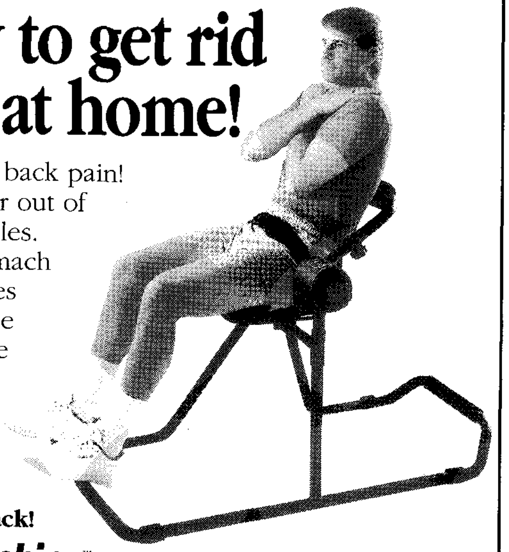

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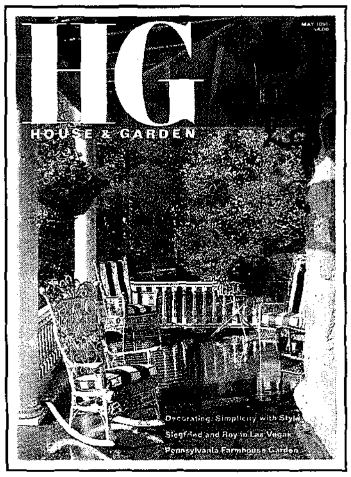

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rather expect them to like a nice, glittering name like Gold."

Gay had laughed and offered her more to drink. I thought, from my vantage point in Gay's bedroom, where I was sorting out all her jewelry on her bedspread—I must have been about ten—that her laugh was not so much with Peggy as at her. There was also my own parentage to consider. I was not only Gay Gibson's granddaughter, I was Simon Rose's daughter. I wonder now whether Peggy Gordon ever considered for one second that her words could hurt me, could hurt my feelings. Doubtful. It probably didn't occur to her that I thought of myself as Jewish. She always fussed over me because I looked so much like a Gibson. I had "the Gibson upper lip."

Gay was fond of her because they went back a long way, and had travelled to Reno together for their first divorces. By the time I was six I knew that the Truckee River ran through Reno, where you went for a divorce. You stood on a bridge and threw your now meaningless wedding ring into that river.

Once, when I was little, the people next door, the Antlers, had a terrible argument, and Mrs. Antler ran out the front door and threw her wedding ring into the bushes in front of their house. I saw her do it. That night I watched from my bedroom window as Mr. and Mrs. Antler together hunted through those bushes, on their knees, with flashlights, for hours.

So, Benedict, where I come from there were a lot of wedding rings tossed around. Me, when I have a wedding ring, I don't intend to take it off. Ever. Just so you know.

Victor sidled into the courtyard just when the waiter was presenting us with menus as big as the bonnet of a small car. Victor joined us, and the waiter nearly knocked off Victor's reading glasses as he flourished another menu under his nose. We were each hidden from sight behind this menu flotilla. Everything about this place was slightly oversized. Perhaps that signifies luxury. I imagine that we looked, from above, like three giant moths poised for flight.

THE voice of Victor insisted that I order the Truite au Bleu, the specialty of the place. He ordered gray sole for Anne, who contributed no thoughts of her own about what she would like to eat.

"I will take the steak," he said to the waiter—rather imperiously, I thought. Why did it bother me so? "I will take the steak." I have no toes, so I will not merely have, as others do, but I will take. I survived childhood at Auschwitz, so I can cheat on my wife and I will take the steak.

The waiter plucked away the menus. I cannot begin to enumerate all the ways that I do not like this man. I do not like what Anne has become, is becoming, will become. A spinster with a special feeling for a certain flower stall. (Victor bought her flowers there once; she has taken me to see the particular shade of roses this vender sells, and I was made to admire them as if the very shade of pink signals the deep significance of it all.) A childless woman alone on holidays. A woman with a gray soul.

Why did I expect that Anne would pay for this meal? In fact, in the end she did pick up the check, but not because Victor managed the simple maneuver of looking the other way. No, by the time the check came it was much more complicated than that.

Our starters had been served, consumed, and cleared (duck-liver pâté and vegetable terrine, quite good, actually, though Victor had been unpleasant with the waiter's suggestion that he might like soup—thoughtless of the waiter not to realize that, having lived on ghastly soup in a concentration camp, Victor is greatly pained when soup possibilities arise in his present life) when another group was seated across from us.

At this point Anne was seated between Victor and me; when Victor was shown to our table, Anne had moved over nearer to me, either despite or in response to Victor's murmured, "Ah, I shall be a thorn between two roses." So we had got ourselves into the same configuration as at the beach. I thought I saw Victor looking uncomfortable, but I didn't think it was in response to anything said, as our conversation at that juncture was pointless and desultory, mostly about the food. The next time I turned my head Victor had disappeared.

He had simply vanished. Anne looked quite disturbed.

"What happened to Victor?" I felt, for a brief moment, on the edge of hysteria, like Ingrid Bergman in "Gaslight." I also had an absurd sense that Anne was about to launch into a complete

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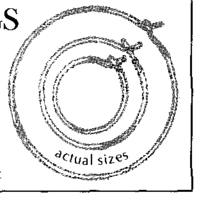

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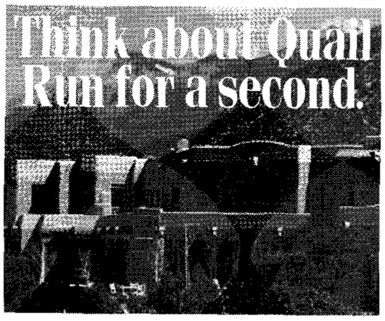

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summary of What Happened to Victor, up to and including the Allied doctors wanting to amputate those hideous feet. Was Victor a demon? A golem? I wished I had taken his picture.

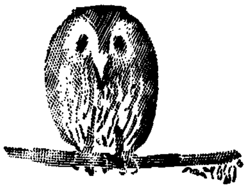
"Victor is right here—he's under the table," Anne murmured, looking straight ahead, her lips barely moving. Her tension was almost comical. I half expected her to say, "Just act natural."

"May I ask why?"

"A woman who plays tennis with Annamarie is at that table."

"Ah. An F. of the F."

"Don't—this is serious," Anne ground out at me through clenched teeth. There was a muffled gasp from under our table. In an attempt to kick me, she had kicked Victor.



Our main courses arrived, borne out to the courtyard by three waiters in a procession. Each carried a tray on which was a plate under a silver dome. The domed plates were placed before us. Victor's was set down at his place. The three waiters looked confused.

"*Monsieur?*" one murmured.

"Monsieur had to leave," Anne replied, in English, so indistinctly that the waiter almost couldn't hear her over the rushing of the stream. He cupped his hand behind one ear and bent down over her shoulder.

"Is everything all right, Mademoiselle?" he asked, also switching to English.

"*Oui*," she answered, cutting off any further discussion.

"You can leave the steak," I said, figuring that Victor might still want to eat it somehow. Also, we were going to have to pay for it. Hell, I would take it home and eat it.

The waiters glumly went through their ritual of simultaneous revelation, whisking all three silver domes high into the air after a wordless count of three. Victor's absence had spoiled it for them.

Now what?

Anne and I ate dinner in total silence. One of her hands was in her lap all through the meal; I realized that she must be stroking Victor's head or something.

"Look, does this happen a lot?"

She shook her head, giving me reason to believe that it did and that discussion about it was unwelcome at this time. I didn't know whether to hurry or linger over the food. How were we going to get Victor out of there unseen? I poked at my trout, which stared me down. I ate my potatoes and my courgette matchsticks done up in a bundle and tied with a string of chive.

My few days in Geneva with Anne had seemed beyond ordinary experience from the start, but this evening was now taking on aspects of a de Chirico. The waiters, the artificial outdoor setting, the imitation of gracious service, the contrived arrangements of food, the deception of Anne's true love lurking under the tablecloth—nothing seemed real. The food had no taste in my mouth. The wine, a Gewürz, tasted like glass.

Across from us, the waiter was erecting menus in front of the people at the table with Annamarie's tennis friend, and, when he had worked his way around, their view in our direction was completely obscured. Victor must have been on the lookout for this opportunity; he flung the tablecloth up and bolted straight out like a sprinter crouched at the starting block when the gun goes off.

Anne and I sat very still, as if we had agreed in advance to ignore this moment. Without turning my head I saw the edge of Victor's jacket go by, and I could hear for an instant the crunching of Victor's shoes on gravel; perhaps I only thought I could hear the Citroën engine turn over. The escape from Stalag 17 was a complete success.

The people at the next table ordered very fussily and precisely, with much mutual consulting, and their menus were folded away one by one until the waiter bustled off with news of their choices for the kitchen.

I asked our waiter for Victor's untouched steak to be wrapped so we could take it home. The waiter sneered and ordered a busboy to do it. Anne declined salad, cheese, a sweet, and coffee, and I didn't argue, although I would have liked coffee. The waiter shrugged and deposited the already totalled check on our table, showing that he had expected as much.

Anne paid. I had credit cards and cash, which I offered, but she didn't want to talk about it. The busboy returned with the steak wrapped in foil that had been fashioned sarcastically into the shape of a swan, with the neck forming a sort of handle.

We got up to leave. I said, "What about—" and Anne shushed me so furiously that I felt slapped, humiliated. We left the courtyard. As we turned out of the restaurant entrance, and Anne stalked past the empty spot where the Citroën had been parked, I realized we were taking the bus back. Damn. I had been looking forward to the comfort of a car ride after dinner.

We filed along in uncompanionable silence, which was disturbed now and again by the rush of passing cars. It was even weirder to be traipsing along this road at night. Cars sometimes slowed in an alarming way. I felt eyes appraising us. I was following Anne, as before, and could not decipher those shoulders, that stride. I felt like a child, with my party-favor swan. I thought of Victor, driving alone in his Citroën. I ought to feel something like sympathy for him, but I don't. I try to see him through Anne's eyes, but I can't.

The bus stop was lit by a solitary street lamp. It felt futile to wait there, long after any bus might come along, but Anne assured me that they ran hourly.

"What do you suppose Victor is going to do about dinner?" I finally asked, wanting to say something, not that Victor's alimentary requirements were high on my list of concerns.

"That's his Axminster, don't you think?"

"Do you think the woman recognized you?"

"I don't see how she could have, as she's never seen me."

"Where do you suppose Annamarie thinks Victor is tonight?"

"I haven't the foggiest. I never think about that."

"Don't you think you ought to, from time to time?"

There was the longest, most uncomfortable silence. Like a mirage, our bus came into view.

OH, Benedict.

Is this what love is, what love makes people do? On the one hand: would you hide under a table for me? On the other hand: why the hell would you need to? Maybe I'm just smug because I've got you, and, compared to this, ours is a simple life. Sometimes, for admittedly brief interludes, I persuade myself that it's all romantic, and European, and I'm a gauche American with naïve ideas about how the world is.

But no. This is awful. I could leave before my two weeks are up, but Anne wants me here; she's made several cryptic remarks about how important this visit is to her. Maybe I'm supposed to bear witness to this glorious erotic connection. Maybe I'm supposed to pass judgment. (Ignatz Mouse *wanted* to go to jail, remember. Am I here to see the flung brick and play Offissa Pup?)

And then there's you, whom I miss very much. How is life at the most uncompetitive tennis camp in New England? I picture you surrounded by rich children in tennis whites scarfing down hot dogs while you sweat over the grill. Luckies. They are sunburned and demanding. You are sunburned and patient. There is red clay staining your sneakers and the left pocket of your shorts. You wish you could have a beer. A camper with a bee sting cries. Smoke gets in your eyes.

If you think I sound confused about Anne and Victor, you're right. I don't know which I fear more: feeling I might have to do something, or feeling I can't do anything. And which would be worse? Do I just want to punish Victor? Could Annamarie possibly be grateful for a note, a telephone call, or would that be a betrayal of Anne, despite its being for the best? And would it be for the best?

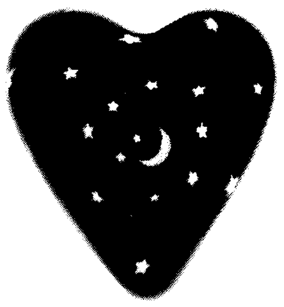
I've got to go, but one more thing. When I was seven, I was standing on the corner at Second Avenue and Fifty-ninth Street with my grandmother—we were on our way to Central Park—when a little boy darted into the street in front of us. Gay let go my hand and lifted him up onto the sidewalk with a quick underarm hoist, and then he turned around in a fury, no little boy at all but a middle-aged dwarf, with acne scars and a Don Ameche mustache. He was about my height.

"Fuck you, lady!" he said—a reasonable response, I suppose, to being rescued when you don't need to be rescued at all. But maybe he was in danger. I've never thought of that possibility until right now. Maybe she did the right thing. What do you think?

I love you for sentimental reasons—

HARRIET

◆



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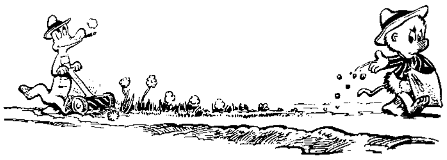

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THE CRITICS

JAZZ

DIZZY

BY WHITNEY BALLIETT

Dizzy Gillespie died early in January, at the age of seventy-five, after playing the trumpet for almost sixty years. He was the last of the four great American musical revolutionaries, the other three being Louis Armstrong, Duke Ellington, and Charlie Parker. (Armstrong and Ellington died in the early seventies and Parker many years before.) Gillespie, like Armstrong and Ellington, had become a new kind of American personage: a Universal Performer, who spent his last thirty years travelling up and down the world spreading the gospel of his music and the light of his amiable, quicksilver personality. As was also true of Armstrong and Ellington, the most inventive part of his career lasted barely fifteen years, from the early forties to the late fifties. During this time, he perfected his dazzling style, wrote a group of original and highly lyrical jazz compositions ("Con Alma," "Woody 'n' You," "Tin Tin Deo," "A Night in Tunisia," "Salt Peanuts"), taught a generation of musicians (sometimes one by one, at a piano keyboard, demonstrating the expanded chords that were the foundation of bebop, his new music), and became a buoyant bandleader, whose onstage dancing, joking, and general carrying on both italicized and sweetened his music. His most famous joke involved announcing midway in his first set that he would like to introduce his musicians, whereupon they would all stand up and, mumbling their names, shake hands with one another. A more private joke involved a doodle he once made on a manila envelope when we were talking. It was done with a single, unbroken line, and it appeared to be three ghostlike figures. I later asked him what it was, and he gave his dissembler's new-moon smile and said, "Three seals on a sled." But it wasn't; it was, I eventually discovered, his initials, J.B.G., made to look like—what else?—three seals on a sled.

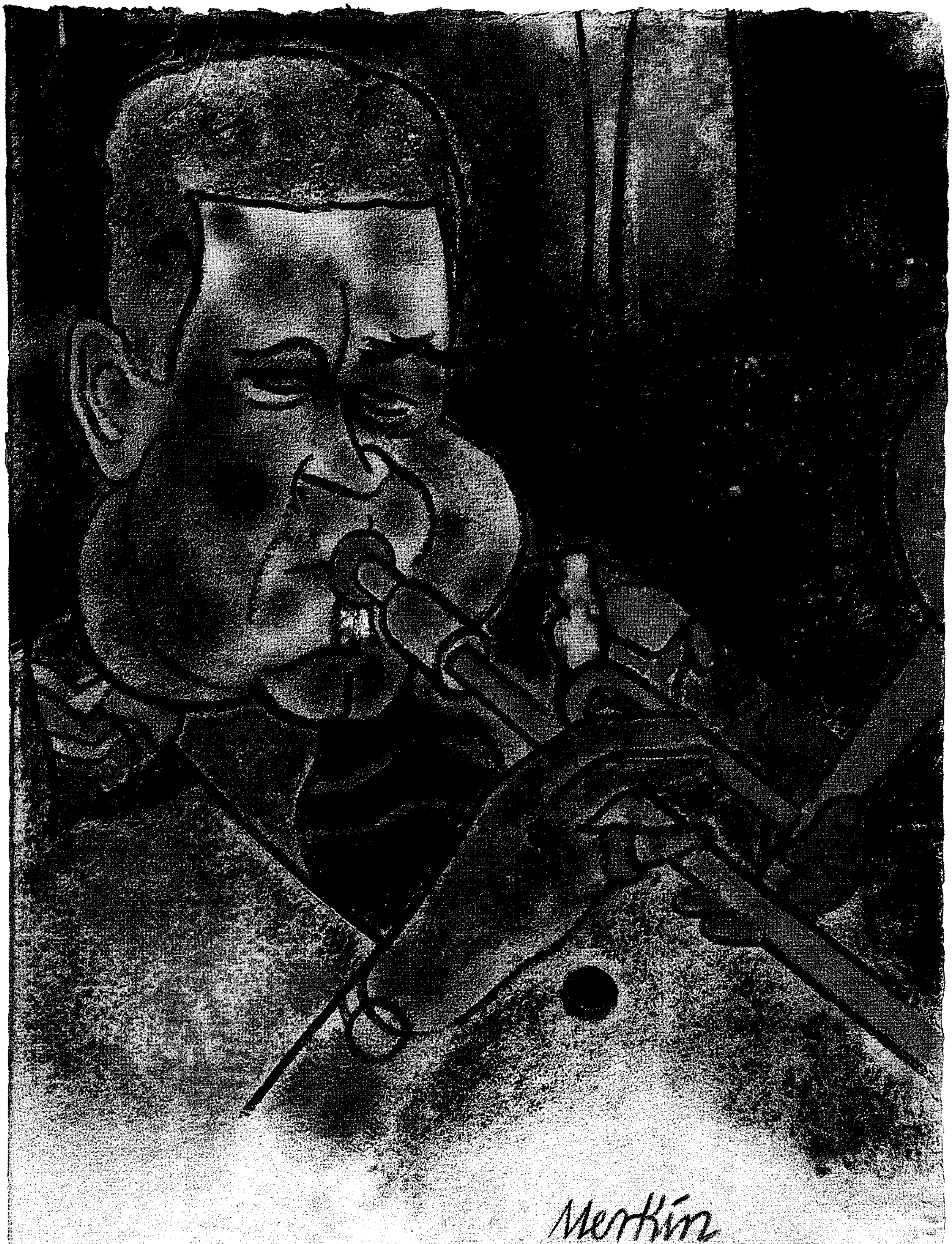
Gillespie was born John Birks Gillespie, in Cheraw, South Carolina. He was rambunctious and got whipped a lot, but by the time he was in his teens he had taken up the trombone and the trumpet. He joined Frankie Fairfax's band in Philadelphia in the mid-thirties and, already horsing around, was nicknamed Dizzy by a band member. He landed his first big job, with Cab Calloway, in 1939, and began forging a new style out of the fireworks of his idol, the trumpeter Roy Eldridge. A year later, he married a strong-minded dancer, Lorraine Willis, who kept him on course throughout his life, and he met Charlie Parker, who became, in Gillespie's words, "the other side of my heartbeat."

Then, in 1941, Calloway fired Gillespie, after they got into an argument over a spitball and Gillespie cut him with a knife. Gillespie floated through several more bands, and suddenly, in the mid-forties, his life took off. During the next five years, he made the first bebop record, co-led the first bebop band on Fifty-second Street, took the first bebop band to California, and, with a big band, introduced Europe to bebop. In 1955, Charlie Parker died, and the bebop revolution ended. A year later, Gillespie, obligingly settling into the establishment, toured Greece, the Near East, and Pakistan for the State Department, and unwittingly began the unofficial ambassadorial duties that went on until he fell ill last winter.

His old friend Virginia Wicks was with him when he became sick. She talked about him the other day: "Last January, there was a monthlong seventy-fifth-birthday celebration for Dizzy down at the Blue Note—six nights a week, two shows a night. A lot of young musicians came to play with him. He had to push himself hard, but I think he felt he wasn't coming up to where he should be. Anyway, he was very tired when it was over, and he was looking forward to taking a week off. But he rarely checked his schedule—he liked to be surprised about where he was going next—and it turned out that he had to go directly to Washington for a night and do two weeks of one-nighters somewhere out West. He ended up in Emeryville, near Oakland, and I went up from L.A. to be with him. During a long photo session the afternoon of his opening, he told me, 'Wicks, I don't feel so good. I must have eaten something bad.' Well, he was an eater, he loved food. After his first set that night, he sat more heavily in his dressing room than usual, and his color wasn't right. When Whale, his road manager, told him it was time for the second set, he said, 'I can't.' It was the first time in his life."

He was taken to a hospital, and the doctors found that his diabetes had got out of hand. He stayed two nights, then finished the gig. He was scheduled for a week in Seattle, and when everybody told him not to go he said, "Don't tell me what I have to do." ("Not mean, just stubborn," Wicks said.) He went home, to Englewood, after Seattle and had a six-hour operation for an intestinal blockage, and, though he seemed to improve, he never really recovered. "He used to say that he knew everybody and

RICHARD MERKIN



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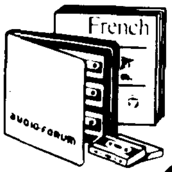

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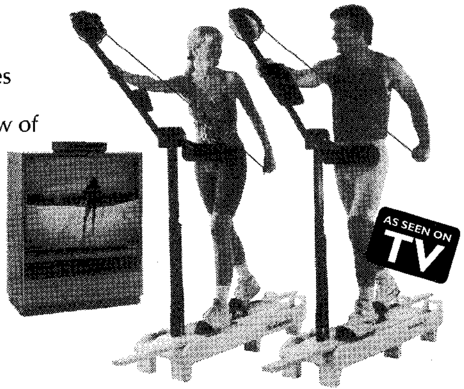

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everybody knew him," Wicks went on. "And it was true. He had a little book filled with the names of people he knew all over the world, and when he arrived at such-and-such a place, he'd call—'Hi, this is Dizzy'—and they'd come and hang out with him. He never took advantage of who he was, and he never acted like a star. I don't know how stars get from here to there, but Dizzy walked down the street."

WHEN Gillespie's style finally came together, in the forties, it was raucous, exhilarating, heedless, and virtuoso. He never paid much attention to tone; his sound, rich or edgy, simply encased his melodic lines. His solos were explosions. He would start a twelve-bar blues chorus with a blaring single note, follow it with a split-second silence, go into a jolting descending run, drop in another tiny punctuating pause, and play a soft triplet and a hurrying ascending figure capped by a second shout. He would then insert a kind of trill, the first part around high C and the second part an octave lower, fall still another octave, fashion an up-and-down figure made up of eighth notes, repeat it, pause, start up the scale, turn, and close the chorus with a jagged downward run. He was an extrovert player—his improvisations moved constantly outward—and his solos tended to mirror him. Even in his slow numbers, he rarely used blue notes, or a vibrato, or the dark bent notes of Roy Eldridge and Red Allen and the 1932 Louis Armstrong. Ten or fifteen years ago, his playing slowed and darker hues appeared, together with startling echoes of such early admirations as Allen and Rex Stewart. He often used a mute, and he ruminated.

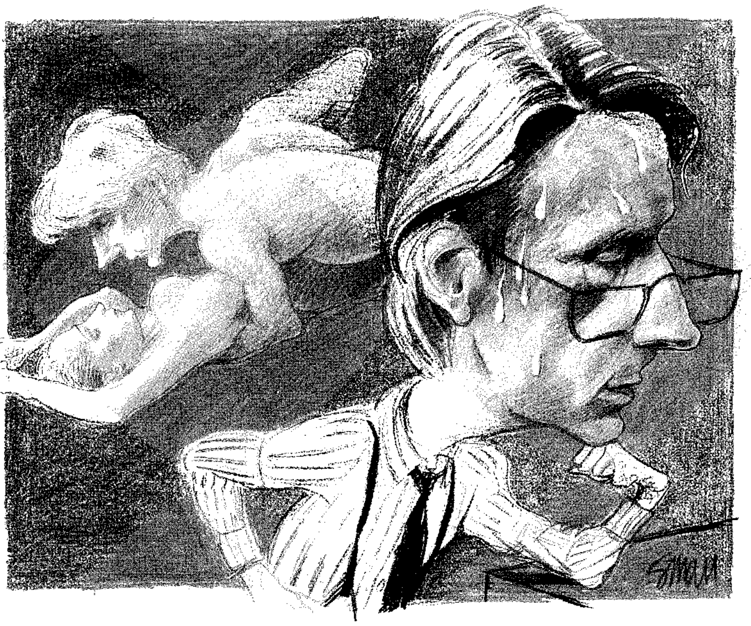
In his last years, the poles of Gillespie's professional life stretched from a one-night stand in a seedy New York club where the sound system had a high hum, the audience was indifferent, and Gillespie himself, just back from a grueling European tour, was exhausted—stretched from that to an early-evening concert on the South Lawn of the White House, which ended when Gillespie, calling President Jimmy Carter "Your Majesty," invited him to sing "Salt Peanuts" with him. Carter did, and Dizzy asked him to go on the road with his band. He was smiling when he said it, but he meant it. ♦

THE CURRENT CINEMA

BASER INSTINCTS

BY TERRENCE RAFFERTY

IN "Body of Evidence," Madonna plays Rebecca Carlson, a woman on trial for the murder of her wealthy older lover. The victim died of a heart attack, but the prosecution argues that Rebecca deliberately induced the coronary with overstrenuous sadomasochistic sex: the state's case, simply put, is that she screwed the man to death. As an application of the femme-fatale principle, the plot idea is impressively literal-minded—bluntly, proudly stupid, like a Mel Brooks gag. But "Body of Evidence" isn't meant to be a joke. It's an absolutely straight-faced mystery thriller of the sleeping-with-the-suspect type, in which a lawyer or a detective falls for a possible murderer and makes love tensely while we wait for the solution. Here the anxious lover/investigator is Rebecca's lawyer, Frank Dulaney (Willem Dafoe). Ever since the 1985 hit "Jagged Edge" (written by Joe Eszterhas, who also wrote last year's "Basic Instinct"), just about every mystery movie made in Hollywood has been a variant of this sex-and-fear formula, and it's getting mighty tedious. The only issue in pictures like these is "Did she (he) or didn't she (he)?," and there's never any way of actually deducing the answer; it's all guesswork. "Body of Evidence," which was directed by Uli Edel from a screenplay by Brad Mirman, mechanically alternates scenes that make the heroine look guilty with ones that make her look innocent (of the murder charge, that is): the movie provides exactly one other plausible suspect—the dead man's secretary, played by Anne Archer. The filmmakers must think that the audience would become confused and alienated if it were presented with too many choices. The low genius of the Eszterhas Binary System for mystery plotting is that it gives even the dullest, most inattentive viewer a fifty-fifty chance to boast "I knew it" when the lights come up.



Jeremy Irons losing his moral compass with Juliette Binoche in "Damage."

DAVID SMALL

Clearly, intellectual stimulation isn't what Edel and Mirman are aiming for; the thriller plot is just an intensifier, a means of heightening the sexual tension generated by the movie's star. "Body of Evidence" is, first and last, a vehicle for Madonna. Everything in the picture plays off the bionic-bad-girl image that she has constructed so meticulously for herself—a persona that qualifies her as one of the great engineering feats of the

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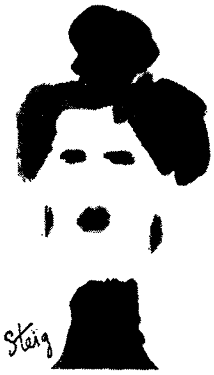
modern world, a media-age equivalent of the pyramids. Rebecca, the defiant dominatrix, is meant to embody aggressive, adventurous, unapologetic female sexuality, and the other characters' reactions to her—repelled, helplessly attracted, or both at once—are the evidence of her power. The movie gives Madonna thirties-style hair, makeup, and clothes, and Edel lights her dramatically, for old-Hollywood allure. In a sense, "Body of Evidence" is an attempt to apotheosize Madonna's contemporary kinkiness by linking it to the hints of sexual threat that stars like Dietrich and Crawford suggested in more innocent (or more circumspect) times. In the hot-wax-and-handcuffs sex scenes, Madonna doesn't do anything to Dafoe that Dietrich wouldn't have done to her suitors in "The Devil Is a Woman." As an elaboration of Madonna's persona, this makes much better sense than her earlier efforts to present herself as the reincarnation of Marilyn Monroe. Monroe was a natural, a girl who just couldn't help it. Madonna is the hardest-working sex symbol in the history of show business. She's all industry, strategy, and expertise: she earns desire by the sweat of her brow.



Aside from morons and people who have never seen a movie before (the studio marketers' favorite segments of the audience), the only viewers likely to be thrilled by "Body of Evidence" are Madonna's academic fans, who are dangerously stimulated by her voluptuous textuality: they gaze avidly, deconstructing her with their eyes. For them, the turn-on of this movie might be the question: In the light of Sharon Stone's brilliant appropriation of Madonna's persona in "Basic Instinct," is Madonna still the author of "Madonna"? (See Borges's "Pierre Menard, Author of Don Quixote.") My layman's opinion on this issue is that Stone's "Madonna" is so much wittier and sexier than its model that it obliterates the original: it turns the "real" Madonna into an immaterial girl. In "Body of Evidence," Madonna tries, with her customary dogged application, to reclaim her creation, but it's no use. She seems to be taking herself too seriously, and her erotic audacity lacks even the illusion of playfulness. Her performance feels strained and heavy-spirited; watching it is like watching Joan Crawford tap-dance.

For most of us, of course, life is too short to spend even the hundred-and-two-minute running time of "Body of Evidence" pondering the paradoxes of Madonna. But you have to do *something* while you're sitting there. You can kill a few minutes feeling embarrassed for Dafoe and Joe Mantegna (who plays the prosecutor), and a few more wondering how Uli Edel, whose most recent picture, "Last Exit to Brooklyn," had no narrative drive at all, got hired to direct a thriller. Every so often, you get to laugh at one of the Schwarzenegger-like catch-phrases that the script provides for the star. ("That's what I do—I fuck!" generated the most enthusiastic response at the screening I attended.) You can dream of what the SCTV players might have done with the material—of John Candy as Divine as Madonna. Or, if you're interested in the technical side of things, you can compare Edel's use of courtroom murmurings with that of, say, early "Perry Mason" episodes. (This is tricky, because you first have to separate the trial spectators' buzzes of outrage from the low hum of dissatisfaction surrounding you in the theatre.) The movie is really much too silly to be offensive, but it is stunningly bad. If "Body of Evidence" has any value, it's in the kernel of cautionary truth represented by Dafoe's character: defending Madonna is back-breaking, possibly humiliating work, and your client won't thank you for it. Academics and pop-culture semiologists should think hard about getting out of the Madonna business, and returning this well-thumbed text to the library stacks; they have nothing to lose but their handcuffs.

SEX kills in Louis Malle's "Damage," too, and it doesn't even look as if it were fun while it lasted. The solemn, silent, elegantly staged couplings in "Damage" act like poison administered in tiny increments over an agonizingly long period of time. The screenplay—by David Hare, from the

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sensationally stupid 1991 best-seller by Josephine Hart—aims to create a sense of tragic inevitability out of a banal infidelity story: what it achieves is lethal predictability. The protagonist, a middle-aged British politician named Stephen Fleming (Jeremy Irons, looking and sounding alarmingly like Boris Karloff), falls in love with Anna (Juliette Binoche), a mysterious half-French beauty who is, as it happens, his son's girlfriend. This is one of those stories in which a man who has lived a respectable, dull, orderly life suddenly gives in to passion and loses his moral compass; and the movie, with the bad faith typical of this genre, satirizes the character's repression and then punishes him for his attempt at liberation. And, of course, it also encourages us to loathe the woman who is the instrument of his downfall.

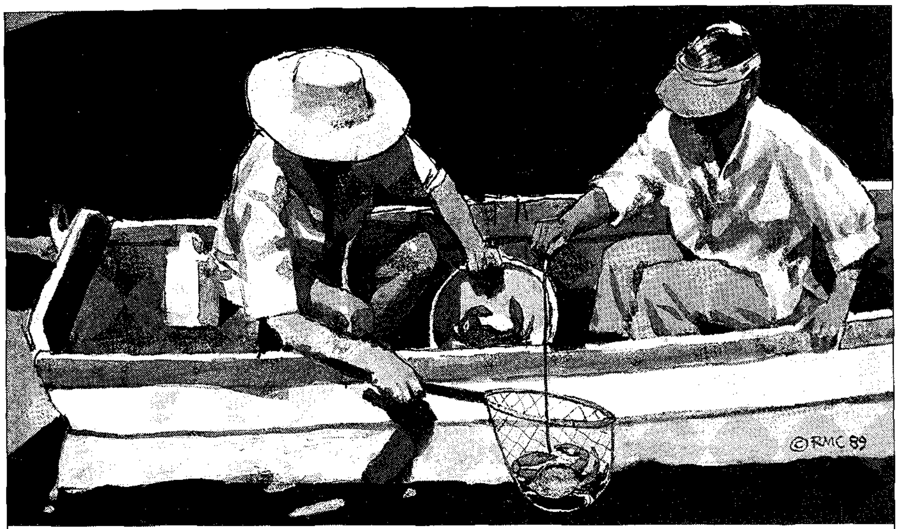
Having chosen a thin and intractably foolish piece of material, Malle tries to get by on style (impeccably lucid, as always) and allusions to more substantial movies about obsessive love and sexual thrall, like "Last Tango in Paris" and "The Story of Adèle H." But the movie that "Damage" evokes most persistently isn't a classic, or even a real movie; it's "Meet Pamela," the frivolous movie-within-the-movie of Truffaut's "Day for Night." It's the same story, and the portent and the air of profundity that Hart, Hare, and Malle lay on it don't improve it: they just prolong the inanity. For almost two hours, the movie alternates joyless, desperate (but tastefully lit) acts of love with painfully awkward family gatherings; then somebody dies and everybody's sad and it's over. Malle has made a few bad pictures, but he has never before misjudged a movie's tone as disastrously as he has in "Damage." He has played artistic sugar daddy to Hart's shallow little novel—provided a lavishly appointed flat for a story that isn't worth a cheap motel room. ♦

LIFE IN CALIFORNIA

[*From Commerce, the magazine of the Santa Barbara Chamber of Commerce*]

Donald R. Ion has been selected as Santa Barbara City College's 1992 Classified Employee of the Year. Ion, a physics and engineering lab technician since September 1990, received $300, a certificate and will have his mane permanently added to an awards plaque in City College's Administration Building.

HOMES & ESTATES



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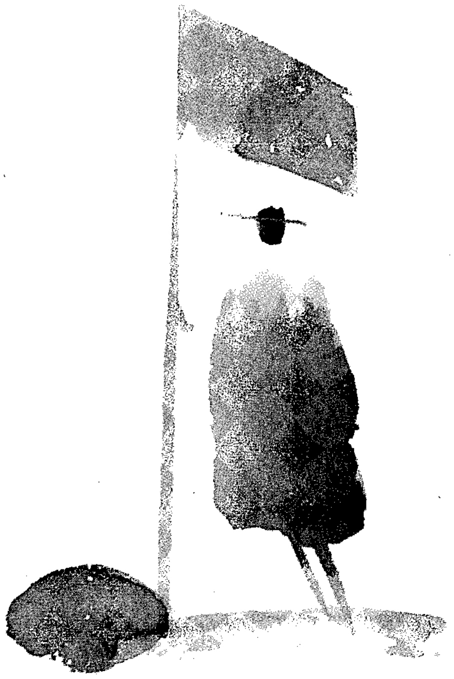
MUSICAL EVENTS

THE EXCURSIONS OF MR. JANÁČEK

BY PAUL GRIFFITHS

NEARLY three-quarters of a century after its first performance, Janáček's fantasy-satire for his nation has still to be seen in New York. City Opera was due to remedy the omission last year, but the production was postponed. Perhaps the company might consider the hugely energetic romp that the director David Pountney and the conductor Charles Mackerras have made of the work for the English National Opera, in London (where the production opened last month), and the Bavarian State Opera, in Munich.



DAVID HOLMES

"The Excursions of Mr. Brouček" is by every definition a problem piece. Its composition was beset by frustrations, many of them due to the fact that Janáček had chosen a subject miles beyond operatic normality—the dreamed visit of a petit-bourgeois Falstaff to a lunar landscape of rarefied poetical beings—and found it hard to carry his librettists with him. The shabby anti-hero Mr. Brouček (Mr. Beetle) and his alcoholic excursion were the invention of the writer Svatopluk Čech, who had set out to ridicule both the type of small-minded, self-satisfied, beer-soused individual and the exquisites among contemporary litterateurs. Evidently, Janáček knew the allegory from its appearance, in 1888, but at that time he was still busy with Romantic Czech mythology, and it wasn't until twenty years later that he seized on Brouček as the stuff of opera—specifically, as the stuff of the kind of opera he might write after the breakthrough of "Fate" (1903-07), in which he had first created a world of vivid, splintered scenes.

For "Fate" he had sought the assistance of Fedora Bartošová, who had been a childhood friend of his daughter and was still in her teens; she had furnished him with a libretto according to his own outline and instructions. But perhaps he felt that the new opera, being based on a work by a national figure, could not properly be a home enterprise, and so he embarked on a long and messy history of trying to get what he wanted out of professional writers. The first didn't want to follow him in changing the original story line, and dropped out after a few months. The second realized from the start that his and the composer's ideas were different, and refused to begin. The third came and went with mysterious speed. The fourth faded from the picture when it became clear that Janáček was perfectly capable of writing his own libretto. The fifth declined and suggested the sixth. The sixth declined and (perhaps) suggested the seventh. The seventh (by now more than four years had passed) delayed. The eighth (by now more than seven years had passed) advised Janáček to give up the idea. The ninth patched together a new version, which Janáček didn't like. The tenth embarked on a wholesale revision only to find that he'd been supplanted by the eleventh. The eleventh was imprisoned in Vienna for treason. So Janáček went back to the ninth, who saw the project through, by way of an expansion into a second excursion, based on a sequel by Čech, which took Mr. Brouček back to the fifteenth century.

The whole extraordinary story—itself a comedy of misunderstandings—is re-told with scholarly precision and narrative gusto in John Tyrrell's new book, "Janáček's Operas" (Princeton; $35), which jolts forward our knowledge of how all these strange works came to be. Dr. Tyrrell's fortunate method is to assemble the documents—Janáček's correspondence with his librettists, with theatres, with the women he loved—and to link them with explanation and infill so that the tale of each opera's composition becomes a novella. Because the genesis of "The Excursions of Mr. Brouček" was so protracted and complicated, it occupies a quarter of the book, but even works that went more smoothly are sharply elucidated, partly because the composer's voice is as vigorously idiosyncratic in his letters as in his music. Here he is, for instance, breaking the news to Librettist No. 9 that the Brouček opera is to be expanded into an entirely new excursion: "There is so much truth in it. To overflowing. At the same time its thrusts still affect us. A new time is coming, it's just around the corner, and to place before it a pure mirror at Vítkov!" (This is where Čech's sequel is set, in 1420, at the battle the Czechs won against the Emperor Sigismund's forces, which had been sent out in a political-religious attack on the freedom the priest Jan Hus had brought to his people.)

Janáček was writing in 1917, when he could foresee that an independent Czechoslovakia might emerge—for the first time since Vítkov—from the collapse of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. By the time "The Excursions of Mr. Brouček" was published and produced, in 1920, his expectations had been fulfilled, and he dedicated the work to the "Liberator of the Czech nation, President Dr. T. G. Masaryk." The dedication was apt: the fifteenth-century excursion is Janáček's celebration of nationhood, if in a comic-proud mode that one can imagine few other composers (and few other nations) sustaining, and the outer parts of the first excursion, before and after the moon scenes, are passionately drawn vignettes of Prague at night. If "The Cunning Little Vixen" comes out of Moravia's woods and fields, this opera is its urban obverse: Janáček's homage to the capital city, the history, and the people of Czechoslovakia. Buried inside its absurdities and complexities is a simple pleasure in home, which the second part expresses with a shout of humor and joy.

This is where the problems inherent in the piece, rather than in its genesis, begin. The second excursion is a different sort of satire, and a different sort of opera: the moon people are butterflies, living on and for the nectar of art; the fifteenth-century Czechs are heroes, with a heroic chorus to back them. We want to see the two groups differently, as the music partly invites us to, but at the same time the setting worryingly confuses reactions, since the principal roles in the two acts are doubled—and even tripled, as most of the same singers also appear in the framing sections, which are set in the dim real world outside Mr. Brouček's hallucinations. We meet the leading soprano, for example, first as a girl in playful tussle with her lover in the streets of Prague, then as Etherea, a lunar muse who becomes grotesquely non-ethereal in her feelings for Mr. Brouček, and, finally, as a heroine of the Hussite wars. Correspondingly, our feelings swivel around the beetle-backed central figure. Where in the first part Mr. Brouček is sympathetic—a fool and a philistine, of course, but winning our admiration for his canniness, his earthy appetites, and his blunt good sense—in the second his cowardice and stupidity aren't so much mitigated by comedy. There's also the difficulty that, while the satire of the first excursion is universal, after the intermission any non-Czech audience finds itself confronted with somebody else's patriotism. An opera that has won us with its high spirits and its sudden shafts of feeling can easily leave us behind when it moves into elevated memories of national rebirth.

In this latest version, unnecessarily retitled "The Adventures of Mr. Brouček," Mr. Pountney's attempt to avoid the threatened discontinuity brings awkwardnesses of its own. His production reminds us of more recent events, in which the whole world has felt itself to be participating in Czech history. The paean after the battle becomes a piece of mime in modern dress, taking us from the Velvet Revolution to the secession of Slovakia, and Svatopluk Čech—whom, in an astonishingly original stroke, Janáček introduced as the author commenting on his own work, welcoming the victory of Vítkov but sorrowing over the present state of the nation—is replaced by Vaclav Havel in the role of national conscience. However fitting these transformations may be, they're heavily didactic: the correspondences across the centu-

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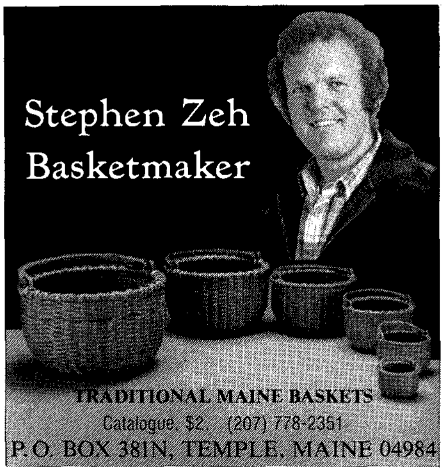
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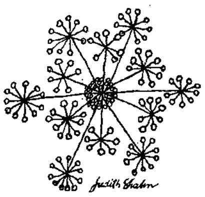
ries don't need to be labored, and the effect is to draw attention to the problem rather than to provide a solution. Everybody is trying too hard.

Mr. Pountney and his designers—Stefanos Laziridis for the sets, Marie-Jeanne Lecca for the costumes—are much more successful in projecting the two excursions as parts of the same opera. They recognize the impossibility of making the fifteenth-century Czechs as silly as the moon artists, but they carry over a certain excess from one ambience to the other. The Hussites come on like pieces in a medieval game: gigantic in buskins or on horses. Their heroism is glorious but also tragicomic, in a way the music seems to sanction: they are emblems fighting for emblems, and Mr. Brouček's reaction to the struggle—to keep well clear—begins to seem at least human.

Another link between the two parts is created by various cinematic effects. As Mr. Pountney points out in the program book, Janáček's operas move rapidly from scene to scene, from closeup (a solo phrase) to long shot (a choral ensemble), and one could add that this technical similarity to the cinema is joined by a shared feeling for spliced emotions—for, in the case of "Mr. Brouček," the comedy and pathos of Chaplin, or the grandeur and madness of Eisenstein. In this production, Mr. Brouček is duly given Chaplin's flexible umbrella and bowler hat as his chief props, and the historical excursion has the events of 1420 taking place between the battle scene from "Alexander Nevsky" and newsreel footage from 1989. More than that, the sets' kaleidoscopes of perspectives on Prague suggest German movies of the time, and a busy wielding of the stage machinery emulates the pace of film editing.



The speed makes it possible for the production to strike off in all kinds of directions, emulating in this respect the unbounded vigor of the music. Where in "Katya Kabanova" Janáček's crashing ostinatos suggest irrevocable fate, similar music in this opera has no correlate in the matter of the drama. The connection seems to be, rather, with the manner: with the wild inventiveness of a dramatic imagination liberated from any pretense of mimicking everyday unfolding through time. Some of the attraction of the subject for Janáček may have lain in its invitation to this sort of freedom. The drunkenness of Mr. Brouček is an excuse for a reeling, careering progress in the Prague scenes, and his dreaming justifies the jump cuts of the two excursions. However, Janáček had already shown in "Fate" that he had no need of realistic explanations for the suddenness of his dramatic events: music could provide the engine, as it does again in "Mr. Brouček," especially when that engine is being handled with the enthusiasm, drive, and lustre that Charles Mackerras brings to the playing of the English National Opera orchestra. The modern Janáček renaissance owes a great debt to Mr. Mackerras, who has been championing the composer in performances and recordings for more than forty years. By now, his work comes not only with the experience of long study but also with the thrill and satisfaction of a task accomplished: this is a golden, exuberant orchestral evening, full of strongly placed sounds, from the swooning tunes of the Prague nocturne to the massive Hussite chorale with brass and organ, or to the weird bits of bagpipe that Janáček also jammed into the mixture for the fifteenth-century excursion.

Mr. Pountney's dramatic mixture has an answering brightness, range, and speed, and an answering intensity of personality: cheerful, generous, snappy, with a sauce of vulgarity. When Mr. Brouček lands on the moon, the first person he meets is the poet Blankytný. Etherea and her maidens then come on as a rowdy bunch of punk feminists, luridly dressed in lime and pink. This was the kind of grand, gleefully appalling vision that had been missing in Mr. Pountney's last production, "The Voyage," at the Met, and it was good to be reassured that he hasn't lost his touch, even if an Etherea in this persona would not be likely to move from march-waltz manifesto to abject surrender at the sight of Mr. Brouček. However, since the point of the piece is that all the emotions of these moon flowers are trivial and self-induced, the lack of dramatic plausibility is defensible—as defensible as the guying of Etherea's love song with outrageous projections of breaking waves, factory chimneys, and trains hurtling into tunnels. Besides, the production keeps up a stream of skits and surprises fast enough to dislocate doubts. ♦

THE THEATRE

FORBIDDEN PLEASURE

BY EDITH OLIVER

"FORBIDDEN BROADWAY 1993," which opened last week at Theatre East, is a glory—as good as any of its predecessors, or even better. It is, however, an all but indescribable glory, since surprise is the essence of the jokes, and I'm damned if I'll spoil them for you. This show, under the aegis of "Forbidden Broadway" 's onlie and extraordinary begetter, Gerard Alessandrini—creator, writer, and director, but non-participant this time—includes "Guys and Dolls," "Crazy for You," "Five Guys Named Moe," "Falsettos," and "Anna Karenina" (all new), and "Les Misérables" and "Phantom of the Opera" (holdovers); and Carol Channing, Julie Andrews, Mandy Patinkin, Patti LuPone, Marla Maples, and Tommy Tune are among the performers singled out for special treatment. Of course, telling you all that is telling you nothing, which is exactly what I have in mind. What I want is for all of you to go at once and laugh for yourselves at this garland of parodies that sharpen, time after time, into satire. "They always go for the jugular," said the canny friend on my right. True enough. The wonder is that any show can be at once so lethal and so stagestruck and, of course, so funny. I must add that the payoff of "Anna Karenina" is Christmas morning come again. There is no limit to Mr. Alessandrini's ingenuity. The inspired performers who do his bidding in assorted roles are Susanne Blakeslee, Dorothy Kiara, Brad Oscar, and Craig Wells. Brad Ellis is the pianist and musical director, and Teresa Vuoso is responsible for a startling array of wigs.

THE little Pearl Theatre Company (Off Off) has mounted a larky production of Oliver Goldsmith's "The Good Natur'd Man," a slapdash comedy that preceded the sublime "She Stoops to Conquer" by five years. "The Good Natur'd Man," written and first put on in 1768, is about a young fellow named Honeywood whose benevolence is so lavish, so undiscriminating, and, in short, so fatheaded that it almost does him in. He is saved by a ruse of his titled uncle's, and ends up engaged to the rich woman (a Miss Richland) whom he has loved and who has loved him from the beginning. The first half is such a crisscross of improbable deceptions and unlikely mistaken identities that it is almost impossible to untangle without a libretto, but everything straightens out, in a manner of speaking, in the second. Even so, "The Good Natur'd Man" is a silly play—a silly play in which every character is sharply and believably observed and in which every line reflects credit on this man who, in the words of his colleague David Garrick, "wrote like an angel but talked like poor Poll." The characters include a couple called the Croakers, he a non-stop groaner and complainer and she a non-stop laugher; their shy and awkward son, in the throes of first love; the charming young object of *his* affections; a shameless deceiver and climber called Lofty, who is exposed and undone at the end; and a satisfying complement of servants and bailiffs and other members of the lower orders, who are often more amusing than the principals.

The Pearl company, under the direction of Anthony Cornish, is truly a company, but one difficulty that cannot be overcome is that Honeywood is a damn fool, who, if we are to believe in a happy ending, must be rescued by the actor who plays him. Kurt Rhoads, while he does all right, isn't strong enough yet to mount that kind of rescue operation, so Miss Richland, per Robin Leslie Brown, gets no bargain. But everything moves along at a clip; every moment is clear (or as near clear as Goldsmith will allow); and the actors do well by him. Robert Joel Schwartz designed the minimal scenery; Laura Perlman designed the lighting; and Deborah Rooney designed the exceptionally good costumes. The production seemed blessedly free of amplification. I say "seemed" because in the program there is a credit for sound design by Donna Riley. Ms. Riley is a very subtle woman. ♦

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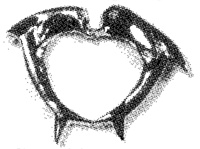

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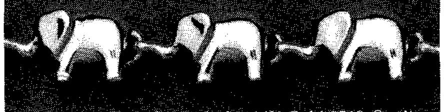

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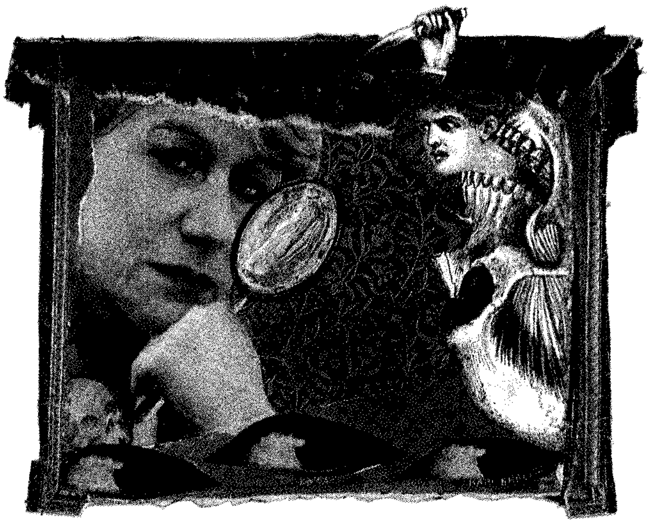
ON TELEVISION

COLUMBO IN FURS

BY JAMES WOLCOTT

THANKS to Glenda Jackson, the truly great acting stretches being made today are being made on TV. When Jackson starred as "Elizabeth R" in the early seventies, playing the Virgin Queen as a sour egg served on a ruff, she established the miniseries form as the marathon mark of an actor's personal best. Carrying a multipart saga requires a carriage, a fervor, and a fuel supply far beyond the reach of mere finesse artists. It means adopting the role as a personal crusade, an extension of one's belief system. Fierce, unyielding, an all-terrain vehicle, Jackson used her stage experience to inject the spirit of Ibsen into the stuffy recesses of BBC costume drama. Like an Ibsen heroine, she aired out a room simply by entering it. She contained the future. Every word she spoke expressed the will of a new woman. Feminism transformed Elizabeth's rarefied conflicts into a struggle faced by all her sex.



As Detective Chief Inspector Jane Tennison, Helen Mirren runs a daily gantlet of grease and gonads.

The heiress to Glenda Jackson as the queen of the quality miniseries is Helen Mirren. She, too, is a stage veteran, having played all the great Shakespearean dames—Ophelia, Cleopatra, Lady Macbeth. As a screen actress, the cool, mineral Mirren has epitomized the lunar aspect of Eurotrash in such lavish writhings as "Caligula" and "The Cook, the Thief, His Wife, and Her Lover." In "The Comfort of Strangers," she even played Christopher Walken's wife; it doesn't get any weirder than that. But none of her exotic roles have had the impact of the tired, tireless homicide chief Mirren plays in the English import "Prime Suspect." The role allows her to show a normal range, tightened a notch. Her washed-out complexion reflects the drain of an overworked conscience.

Created by Lynda La Plante, "Prime Suspect," which PBS broadcast last year and is repeating now, and its sequel, "Prime Suspect 2," which premières February 11th, are classic police procedurals, with plenty extra on their plate. The lone woman of authority in a chauvinist-pig preserve, Mirren's Detective Chief Inspector Jane Tennison runs a daily gantlet of grease and gonads. Unlike Jackson in "Elizabeth R," Mirren has no recourse to rhetoric; the scripts, as rough as sandpaper, compel her to assume a stoic stance. Her poker face, a mesh of dots, seems composed of news-photo pixels. It's an information screen on which we read her reactions to the latest reports from the field. Her personal emotions she keeps in a separate file.

"I'm not a driven, obsessive, ruthless person like that character," Helen Mirren told me recently, in Los Angeles, where she resides with the director Taylor Hackford when she is not cavorting buck naked on European film sets. "The thing I like about Jane Tennison—such a boring fucking name—is that she's unlikable but sympathetic, I hope. She's just a normal, sort of messed-up human being, you know, who's flawed and selfish and egotistical, and also vulnerable." Despite her daggery reputation, Mirren doesn't revel in the prospect of playing an all-out virago, à la Glenn Close in "Fatal Attraction." "I'd be devastated if everyone was

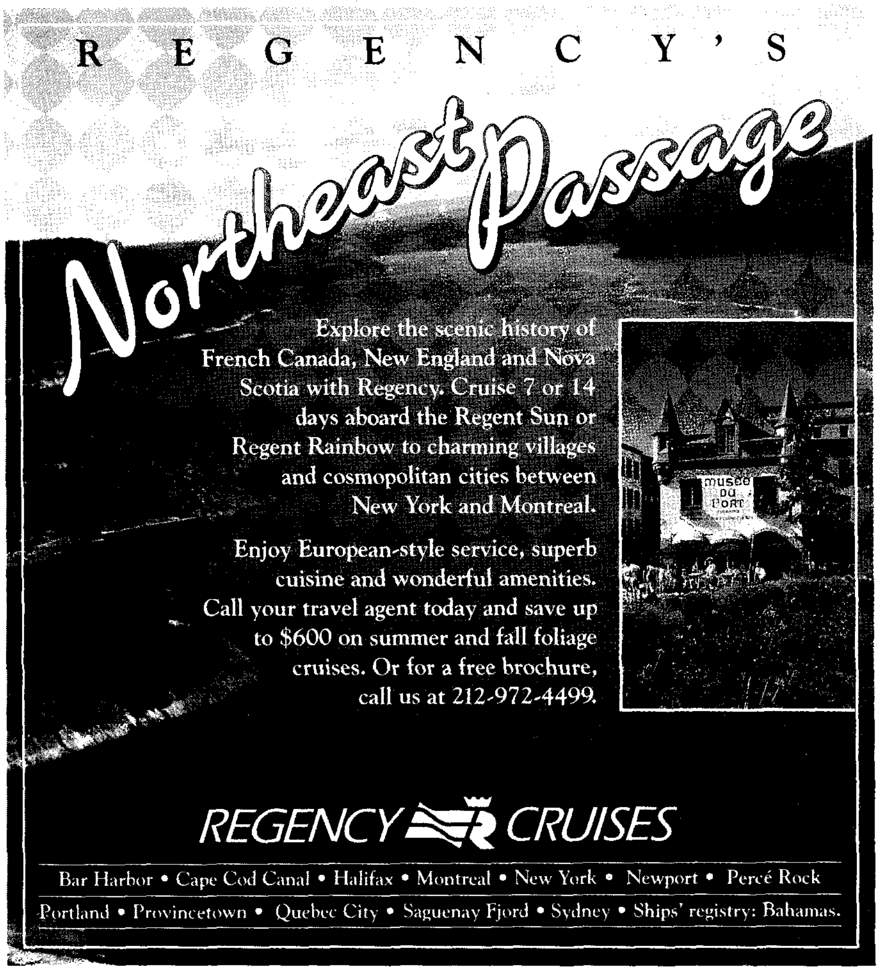
KARI KROLL

screaming at the end of the film when I was killed, 'Yes! Got her! Great!' I'd shrivel up and die inside." Is it really the audience's blood lust that dismays Mirren? Or is it the character's crazed lack of control? No matter how amorally Mirren's women may behave, they never lose their beady concentration. Before each major meeting in "Prime Suspect," Jane Tennison pauses in front of a mirror to tug on her jacket, tuck back her hair, and check her lipstick, aligning her body into a flat suit of armor. She seems to be standing guard over her public self, trying to insure that she doesn't trip over a loose thread.

Which is what almost happens in "Prime Suspect 2," written by Alan Cubitt. A single indiscretion gives all the "lads" in her outfit Grade A gab material. At a police conference, Tennison has a one-night stand with a black officer (Fraser James), whom she slyly eyes as if he were the best candy bar on the block. Showing a shifty side of herself, she treats him as if he were equally disposable. "That'll do, thank you very much" is her tone after sex. But when a girl's corpse is found buried in a back garden in a predominantly black neighborhood, he's assigned to Tennison's unit to assist in the case (the white detectives having botched the initial inquiry with their big, clumsy attitudes). She's far from pleased. His presence is like having a bit of the past flung in her face. It disrupts the compartmentalizing of her personal and professional lives.

It also points up the perils of a professional woman's sexual options: if she has an affair with a superior, she's accused of sleeping her way to the top; if she has an affair with a subordinate, she's accused of slumming. The old double standard still applies. If a man has a fling with some junior fluff on the staff, Mirren says, it's accepted as jolly fun, nudge-nudge-wink-wink, then forgotten. "But with a woman it becomes a weapon, a card to be used against her. It can be tucked into their pockets to be brought out at any time that they want to bring her down." A woman without strong allies can ill afford such a drop in status. And there are no crueller put-down artists than cops after a Scotch or three. His being black and magnificent would rip through their raunchy minds like bathroom graffiti.

This conjunction of race, sex, and age makes "Prime Suspect 2" a more thematic tangle than its predecessor. Early on, you worry that the series may have sacrificed story to whip up agitprop: after the victim's



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body is disinterred, during a rainstorm (a moody downpour: the weather seems to be Method-acting), there's a community meeting with so much righteous posturing that everybody sounds like talk radio. But, as in the first "Prime Suspect," the human factor plays second fiddle to forensics once the data, clues, surmises, and discrepancies begin to form a matrix. (Tennison circles the victim's reconstructed head as if it were a Rodin.) John Strickland's direction has documentary drive and dig, a mousy smell beneath its scratched metal, and stumbles only with some sex-pervert melodramatics near the end. One sequence—a suicide bid following an interrogation gone bad—builds like a panic attack.

Were it not for Mirren's phenomenal focus, both "Prime Suspect"s might have been nothing more than pulp whodunits for armchair sociologists. She authenticated the mode. Through the sharp line of her body, the pinch of her mouth, the patient chop of her questions, she traps the energy around her with a pedagogic tenacity. Jane Tennison is never more herself than when she is summarizing the facts of the case, ticking off each point on her fingers. It brings out the headmistress in her, a higher celibacy that has its own charisma. (Expertise is always sexy.) Through Tennison, Mirren has created not only a pop-cult perennial worthy of Columbo's raincoat but a self-portrait of her fears, prides, and frustrations as a middle-aged actress trying to hold her own in a youth-and-beauty setup. She confronts herself and comes out the other side reaffirmed.

In England, where the miniseries have been popular and critical hits, Mirren's career has enjoyed a second wind. She no longer plays only to subtitle readers. So it's easy to understand why she resents the prospect of being robbed of the role of Jane Tennison in an Americanized feature film of "Prime Suspect" being developed by Grenada Films and Universal. It's like having an impostor's face sewn onto her skin. "Tell Universal I'll be very pissed if Jane Fonda or anyone else plays the part. It's mine," Mirren told me as our conversation came to an end. But she has been around long enough to know that Hollywood doesn't care beans about her squatter's rights. What's theirs is theirs. I say: So what if the movies manhandle "Prime Suspect"? It'll be only a temporary displacement. On TV, where reruns are forever, Mirren rules. ♦

BOOKS

DUMB LUCK: BUSH'S COLD WAR

BY DAVID REMNICK

STRANGE that George Bush should have staked his reputation on a gift for statecraft. For a Yale man, he was unlettered in the lessons of modern history, and he was nervous at the thought of revolt—even revolt in the name of democratic ideals. Bush's capacities were never intellectual or visionary. During a tour through Eastern Europe in 1989, he surveyed the great sweep of the democratic revolution and proclaimed, "There's big stuff, heavy stuff going on here." His instincts and language were more those of the affable clubman, the hail-fellow of Skull and Bones who believes, as clubmen do, that you can take the measure of a man by looking him in the eye and feeling the pressure of his grip.

The Bushian mode of personal diplomacy, as it is portrayed in "At the Highest Levels," by Michael R. Beschloss and Strobe Talbott (Little, Brown; $24.95), naturally tended to work best when he was dealing with those he deemed "dependable": Wojciech Jaruzelski, the Saudi sheikhs, the Chinese dynasts, and, after a bewildering delay, Mikhail Gorbachev. He reserved a degree of inchoate admiration for the bravery of such as Vaclav Havel and Lech Walesa, the Lithuanian musicologist-revolutionary Vytautas Landsbergis, and the bumptious President of Russia, Boris Yeltsin. But these men, finally, were forever acting righteous or otherwise rattling the global dinnerware. They were unclubbable.

Just as Bush cherished solidity in his partners, he craved a buttery smoothness in world events. He could not abide surprises, even if they meant the satisfaction of long-held dreams of his nation. As the nominal head of the anti-Communism party, he seemed at times more at ease with reformist Communists than with the unruly aspirations of democratic activists. It was Bush who in 1989 said that the sudden collapse of Communism in Poland would be "more than the market can bear." And it was Bush who went to Ukraine at the height of the independence fervor only to give the pusillanimous address that will forever be known as the Chicken Kiev speech—to protect the imagined sensibilities of Gorbachev in Moscow.

In the case of the Cold War's miraculous dissolution, Bush mistook his great good fortune for greatness itself. His vanity was that of the heir who claims his trust fund as a credit to his own initiative. In fact, with the Soviet Union on the verge of destitution, Gorbachev ended the Cold War because he could not afford to do otherwise. That he did what he did in the face of tremendous political opposition and without calamity certainly gives him the right, despite any mistakes or miscalculations he may have made, to be called the pivotal world leader of the era. His series of brave retreats—first in rhetoric, then in nuclear arsenals and territorial claims—was this century's greatest political gift.

The West was a happy witness to that blessed event, and the main role of the United States government was to encourage the process and help manage its quick success. While Gorbachev ran up the white flag, the Bush Administration had only to seem to negotiate in good faith, the better not to infuriate the generals and spymasters at the General Secretary's throat. The wonder of it was how clumsily the Administration went about its task. The triumphalism of the White House may have been of some use at political rallies of the Veterans of Foreign Wars, but it also played into the hands of the men who would stage the August coup in Moscow. The cynical conspirators were able to charge that America was celebrating victory in the Cold War rather than reconciliation, and that Gorbachev had been little more than an agent of Western influence. The beauty part was that everything went well anyway. The coup failed. The regime collapsed. For once, the world was lucky.

BUSH and his team, first in their unsuccessful attempt at reëlection, and then in the hope of winning history's fa-

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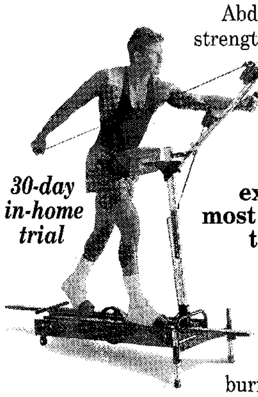

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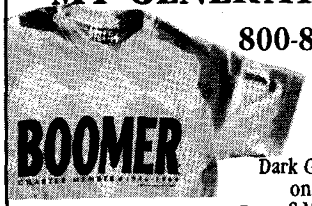

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vor, brag about the American role in the ending of the Cold War. But they did not fool the electorate, and they do not seem able now to fool the first wave of Cold War historians.

Beschloss and Talbott have obviously talked to the key members of the White House and Kremlin leaderships for "At the Highest Levels," a lean narrative history of the superpower relationship between Bush's Inauguration, on January 20, 1989, and Gorbachev's resignation, on Christmas night of 1991. As a result of the Bush people's yearning to trade access for what they hoped would be history's admiring glance, the book is filled with gaudy historical riches—phone calls, cables, reconstructions of private meetings—that could have come only from James Baker, Brent Scowcroft, and their underlings, and others of similar rank. The leakers must have hoped that they would have a friend in this estimable team of Beschloss, the diplomatic historian, and Talbott, a *Time* editor unsurpassed in his ease with and entrée to the Washington establishment. It is telling, then, that the evidence provided to the authors should prove mainly that Bush, Baker, and Scowcroft were, despite themselves, little more than fortunate. The ethos of personal diplomacy, the obsession with politesse and loyalty to a partner rather than with a political and moral goal, nearly got the United States and the world in a lot of trouble.

Bush came into office in a time of unprecedented opportunity. Gorbachev's strength was such that, willingly or not, he had inspired the rise of a new wave of political movements in Russia and the other republics far more radical than he. And so what did Bush, the Vice-President for eight years, do at this optimal moment? He declared a "time-out" on any initiatives with Moscow and did his utmost to prove his anti-Communist mettle to the right wing of the Republican Party. In a series of opening volleys, Bush's press secretary declared Gorbachev a "drugstore cowboy," and Bush's Vice-President called him just a Stalinist "in Gucci shoes." The Cold Warriors in Moscow, of course, understood these insults as proof that they had gone too far in their concessions to the West.

Once this strange and hapless interregnum was over and Gorbachev was welcomed into the President's confidence, the Administration proceeded to fall in love, building its policy around its new friend rather than reacting nimbly to an evolving and extremely complicated situation. There were times during the Bush years when American policy seemed directed above all at the preservation of Gorbachev's pride, not at the successful end of the Cold War and a transition to democracy in the republics of the Soviet Union.

Despite the almost limitless prestige of the United States among the democratic forces in the Soviet Union, the Administration time and again managed to humiliate Boris Yeltsin, the leaders of the Baltic states, and other democratically elected figures—just to protect Gorbachev. Scowcroft's fingerprints are all over "At the Highest Levels"; he must have thought he could spin Beschloss and Talbott like a top. But the authors, while adopting an unanalytical narrative as their method, provide us with the startling facts of the White House's willful ignorance of the real trends in Moscow and the republics in 1989, 1990, and 1991. At a White House meeting with Yeltsin in September of 1989, Scowcroft fell asleep in his chair and then complained that the Russian leader was "devious" and a "two-bit headline grabber."

I can report from my own meagre experience that what Beschloss and Talbott say about the White House's adoration of Gorbachev and contempt for Yeltsin is true. In the spring of 1990, as a Moscow correspondent for the Washington *Post*, I was covering one of Gorbachev's trips to Washington. I had read and heard about the Bush White House's romance with Gorbachev, but, living in Moscow, I had not seen the lovers' blush close up. Then, at a lunch with editors and reporters at the *Post*, Scowcroft swooned like an Atlanta belle for Mikhail Sergeyevich; as for Yeltsin, Scowcroft pronounced him a "baboon"—definitely not our sort. The lunch took place just a few days after Yeltsin had been elected chairman of the Russian parliament despite Gorbachev's desperate and outspoken support of two of the dimmest Communist Party hacks since the Brezhnev era.

The Bush Administration was at least as terrified of the breakup of the Soviet Union into independent republics as Gorbachev was. Beschloss and Talbott report that in several private conversations Bush recalled Dwight Eisenhower and the Soviet invasion of Hungary in 1956, saying on one such occasion, "I am not going to be a President who gives subject peoples the false impression that if they rebel they are going to get help." In fact, Bush seemed willing to sanction or overlook Moscow's use of force. After Soviet Army and police troops slaughtered dozens of Azerbaijani protesters, in January of 1990, there was not a peep of rebuke out of Washington. Bush told *Newsweek* that he would "love" to have seen the use of force avoided in Baku, "but here you have an internal situation where the Soviet Union is trying to put down ethnic conflict, internal conflict." When Landsbergis and the Sajudis popular front were on the offensive in their campaign for Lithuanian independence, in 1991, Bush seemed to share Gorbachev's wrath. On my own reporting trips to Vilnius then, I found that many of the Lithuanian leaders were nearly as anxious about the lack of support and will in Washington as they were about the threat of violence from Moscow. Washington seemed to say, Who are these impertinent Lithuanians that they should want their liberty? Why are they so . . . impolite?

One of the more devastating themes running through "At the Highest Levels" is the refusal of Bush, Scowcroft, and Baker to listen well to the counsel of the Ambassador in Moscow, Jack Matlock, and the Central Intelligence Agency, who were urging the White House to pay greater attention to the reality of Gorbachev's weaknesses and the increasing importance of Yeltsin and the republican independence movements. Beschloss and Talbott also do a superb job in filling out the details of the story of the Moscow mayor at the time, Gavriil Popov. In June of 1991, Popov came to Matlock at the American Ambassador's residence and told him that the leaders of the K.G.B., the Communist Party, and the Army were preparing a coup d'état against Gorbachev. With the coöperation of Bush, Baker, and the Soviet Foreign Minister, Aleksandr Bessmertnykh, Matlock himself carried the news to Gorbachev. Foolishly, Gorbachev dismissed the warning with nary a shrug. Gorbachev's sense of invulnerability had long since become his most serious shortcoming. The Administration's reaction

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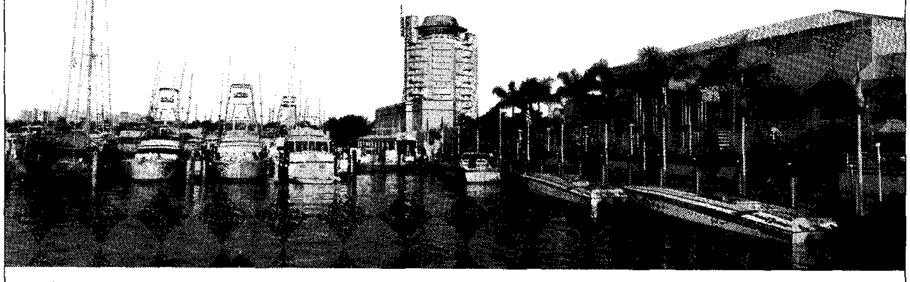

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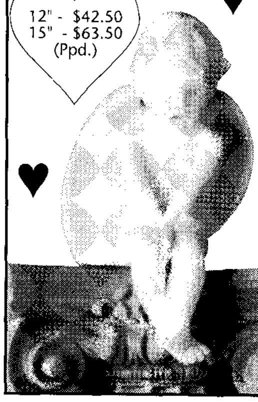

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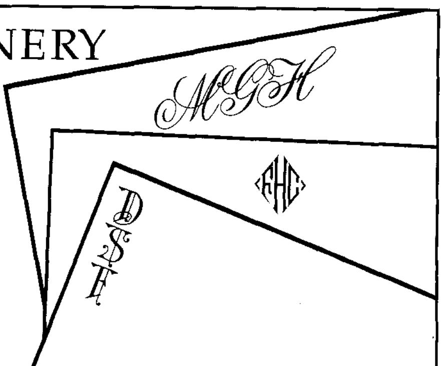

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to the evidence of a coup plot was nearly as remiss as Gorbachev's. Despite the C.I.A.'s increasingly solid knowledge of a growing conspiracy around Gorbachev and the need to shore up the strength of the pro-Yeltsin forces to defeat a possible coup, Scowcroft wrote off the intelligence agency as a hotbed of Yeltsinistas.

When the worst did happen, in August, the Bush Administration should not have been taken by surprise. Before making his first public statement on the coup, Bush talked with Baker and asked him about Gennadi Yanayev, the Soviet Vice-President, who was now pretending to the Soviet Presidency while Gorbachev was under house arrest in the Crimea. Yanayev, as everyone in Moscow knew, was a drunk, a womanizer, and a retrograde politician; the only reason Gorbachev had made him his Vice-President in the first place was to placate the Communist Party regulars. And yet Baker advised his Commander-in-Chief, "Maybe the thing to do is go easy on him at first."

And so it went. At eight in the morning on August 19th at Kennebunkport, Bush made his first public statement on the coup. He refused to call it illegal or unconstitutional, and instead used Scowcroft's bland formulation "extra-constitutional." On being asked about Yanayev, Bush said, "Well, my gut instinct is that he has a certain commitment to reform . . . but I think it's not he that's calling the shots . . . . I've said over and over again that we did not want to see a coup backed by the K.G.B. and the military."

It is not easy to convey the horror with which Bush's noncommittal statement was received among the democratic resisters to the coup in Moscow. (Only François Mitterrand did worse.) The wonder is that Bush seemed at such a loss. If he had solid intelligence on the coup two months before it happened, why did he react so clumsily? In fairness, as it became obvious that this was no ordinary coup, that it was a Keystone Cops operation from the start, the Bush statements grew bolder. But the moment for vision and diplomatic bravery was gone.

When the democratic forces finally prevailed, the Administration, as usual, advertised its unparalleled leadership when in fact it was lucky only to have done no harm. The level of self-congratulation makes one cringe. The authors report that the President's son George, Jr., riding on Air Force One, "saw the Soviet crisis as a reminder that the world was still a treacherous place, and that his father's experience in foreign policy was still important," and they add, "Encountering a reporter in the back of the plane, he asked, 'Do you think the American people are going to turn to a Democrat now?' "

THE book is filled with such details of vanity. When the authors rel on description rather than incident, however, they tend to lapse into breathless recitations of *Time*-ese detail that does little but buff the finish on power's sleek sides: "Gorbachev greeted his guests under a large chandelier in the wood-paneled entry hall and then took them up a grand staircase to his ballroom-sized library. Sitting across from the Americans at a glass-topped table, he crossed the index and third finger of both hands and held them aloft, saying . . ." But more often "At the Highest Levels" succeeds because of its almost perverse lack of ornament. It is that unusual thing a spare, fair-minded account of the facts and the way decisions are made. With extraordinary speed and confounding success, Beschloss and Talbott have produced an accurate first draft of the Cold War's last days.

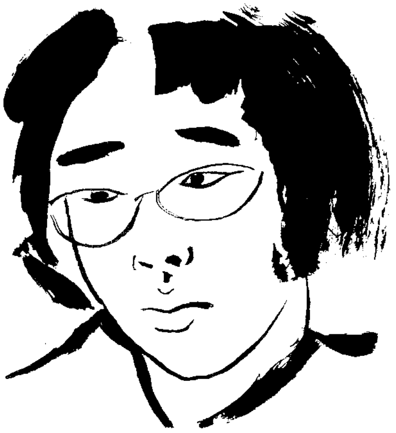
For some, the problem of sources will be bewildering. There are no footnotes or source notes here. Even the Washington insider, confident of his ability to deconstruct every dusty scroll of the Beltway, will be left to wonder, and worry, about who leaked what. At least for now. Beschloss, the author of the definitive work on the confrontation between Kennedy and Khrushchev, explained to me that he and Talbott could never have got the documents and access they did so soon after the fact if they had not promised their sources anonymity. That is a frequent rationale for many authors, but Beschloss said that a fully sourced and annotated version of "At the Highest Levels" would be lodged, for now, in the Williams College library and released for scholarly examination "after a period of time."

Fortunately, we will not have to wait for the footnotes to glean the most uplifting of the lessons offered in "At the Highest Levels": sometimes the gods are willing to overlook even the most concerted efforts of the powerful to foul up the chance of a lifetime. ♦

DAY-O!

BY DEBORAH GARRISON

BANANA YOSHIMOTO'S "Kitchen" (Grove; $14.95) is a tangy, imperfect little snack. The book, though it appears to be a short novel, is really a pair of stories—the first, called "Kitchen," is just long enough, at a hundred and three pages, to be classed as a novella. A literary prize-winner and long-running best-seller in Japan a few years ago, it arrives here translated, somewhat doggedly, by Megan Backus and attended by a small but irresistible fanfare of cuteness. There's a photograph on the mint-and-dark-peach jacket of a bright-eyed Japanese girl in a white eyelet dress, her hair stylishly longer on one side than the other—someone it might be fun to know. She's not Banana, but the packaging doesn't entirely lie. The author was only twenty-four when "Kitchen" was first published, and reading it, along with its less ambitious companion, "Moonlight Shadow," gives you the sense that you're meeting a real young woman, who is, among other things, cute. Both stories are told by a naïve, occasionally goofy first-person narrator, whose bursts of energetic resolve are as girlish as her cries of passionate despair.



Banana Yoshimoto's "Kitchen" is a quirky mixture of teenybopper and Zen.

CHRIS CURRY

What makes this girlishness palatable—what counterbalances it—is the author's preoccupation with grief. "When my grandmother died the other day, I was taken by surprise," Mikage, the twentyish heroine of "Kitchen," explains at the start of her strange tale. "The fact that time continued to pass in the usual way in this apartment where I grew up, even though now I was here all alone, amazed me. It was total science fiction. The blackness of the cosmos." An only child whose parents died when she was little, Mikage was brought up by her grandmother. But her musings on her plight are mostly uplifting and practical in nature. She acknowledges, for example, the relief: "To live alone with an old person is terribly nerve-racking, and the healthier he or she is, the more one worries." She confesses the battier aspects of her search for comfort: "Steeped in a sadness so great I could barely cry . . . I pulled my futon into the deathly silent, gleaming kitchen"—and she sleeps there, curled like a forlorn family pet at the base of the refrigerator.

"However!" she continues. "I couldn't exist like that. Reality is wonderful." She's the opposite of the depressive who masks pain under a noisy (and transparent) cheerfulness; she keeps telling you she's depressed, listless, and tearful, but she can't hide her essentially sunny nature.

Yoshimoto's writing isn't itself very complex; it skips lightly over the surface of even Mikage's darkest hours. But what she's trying to describe—happiness—*is* complex, and is much trickier to evoke convincingly than misery, maybe because the sources of true contentment are more obscure. Obviously, reality isn't as wonderful as Mikage claims: she is utterly without family, and she has to find a way to manage on her skimpy inheritance. But she is graced with the stubborn happiness of the survivor, which can crop up out of nowhere after a death in the family and thrive like a weed.

What also crops up out of nowhere for Mikage is an invitation to live, rent-free, at the Tanabe residence. Yuichi Tanabe, a reserved young man about Mikage's age, visits her after her grandmother's funeral and proposes that she

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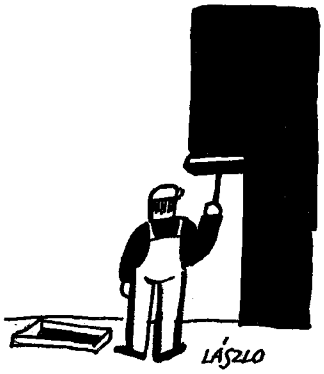
come to live with him and his mother. (Yoshimoto's way of effecting this and all transitions is so matter-of-fact you can't decide whether it's charming or dopey. "*Dingdong*. Suddenly the doorbell rang," she writes.) Mikage's reaction to Yuichi's polite appearance on her threshold—"I couldn't take my eyes off him. I think I heard a spirit call my name"—is a bizarre blend of teenybopper and Zen: love at first sight, non-Western style. Mikage also takes an instant liking to Yuichi's stunningly pretty mother, who turns out, to the reader's baffled delight, to be a man. Yuichi delicately introduces the subject to Mikage with "Guess what else . . ." His mother was his father—before plastic surgery. This is a wonderful touch, not because it's played for laughs (it isn't) or because it's a big surprise (strangely, it's not that, either) but because it's a piece of superfluous inventiveness on the author's part; it lends everything around it an air of cheerful unreality that mirrors Mikage's state of mind.



Yoshimoto, for all her narrative exuberance, understands the one-step-forward, two-steps-back emotional indirectness of a young person in crisis. The death of Mikage's grandmother is only the prelude to the more shocking, untimely death of Yuichi's mother, and the news of it causes Mikage, who has since moved into her own place, to appreciate the powerful solace of her days at the Tanabes': of sleeping on their couch and hearing Yuichi's mom clatter in on her heels, humming a tune; of perfecting her cooking skills in their underutilized kitchen; of waking up in the middle of the night at the same time as Yuichi and comparing dreams with him. The reader learns of these moments only in retrospect because it is only in retrospect that Mikage comes into full possession of their significance. Most of "Kitchen" occurs not in real time but in mental hyperspace—the virtual rather than chronological aftermath in which events are digested and understanding is gained.

But the story finally seizes on a down-to-earth matter: whether Mikage and Yuichi, in their shared orphanhood, should become lovers or remain fast, sibling-like friends. Yoshimoto can't render it a very compelling question: the intimate rapport between Mikage and Yuichi simply fails to be as interesting as the lively, perfectly achieved completeness of Mikage taken by herself. Her outburst following a good long cry over her grandmother ("I implored the gods: Please, let me live"); her remark at the sight of clouds blowing around in a strong wind ("In this world there is no place for sadness")—these rariti will stay with the reader.

Mikage is, throughout, a little bit weird, and so are the other characters. Yoshimoto's attraction to weirdness and her unpretentious approach to it—she's not trying to be hip, just faithful to her sense of people as they are—are what might make Western readers want more of her. (Two novels and two collections of essays have come out in Japan since "Kitchen.") And Banana Yoshimoto herself seems an odd one; it's hard to know what genus to put her in. She can't be called a Japanese counterpart of members of the American literary brat pack. She's not jaded enough—she's too adorably nerdy, and she's way too friendly. She's not a brat. In fact, she makes you wonder if bounce-and-shine is still a standard feature in the artistic youth of other nations; you just don't see too much of it around here. Yoshimoto even includes an afterword to the American edition of "Kitchen," in which she expresses the hope that the book will be a balm to those who have known setbacks in their lives; there's a generous, therapeutic impulse somewhere inside this fiction writer. "Surely we will meet someday," she closes her message to the reader, "and until that day, I pray that you will live happily." Such graciousness feels weird, too—it's foreign, anyway. Bu why be wary of a kind wish? ♦

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[*Headline in the Ball State Daily News, student newspaper of Ball State University, in Muncie, Ind.*]

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FICTION

Black Dogs
by Ian McEwan (Doubleday; $19.50)

"EVER since I lost mine in a road accident when I was eight, I have had my eye on other people's parents." So Jeremy, the middle-aged British narrator, begins this memoir about his estranged in-laws and the ideological differences that pulled their passionate marriage apart. Bernard and June Tremaine are Communists when they marry in London shortly after the war, and Bernard remains a political and social reformer for the rest of his life, eventually becoming a Labour M.P. June, to her husband's dismay, turns abruptly and deeply religious on their honeymoon, after a terrifying encounter with two black dogs in the South of France. Jeremy produces a handful of intimate and often moving stories about their respective pasts—a trip to Berlin in November, 1989; an argument over the killing of a dragonfly on a deserted railway platform in 1946; an unlikely romantic union in a small Polish town in 1981; a visitation in a dark and empty house—yet all of twentieth-century history seems to be pressing into these lives. The ingenious result is a leisurely and expansive meditation on the nature of good and evil, the moral limits of political reform and religious belief, the intoxications of violence and the redemptive power of love—in less than a hundred and fifty pages, and without a trace of pretension or a moment of tedium. This is a brilliant book.

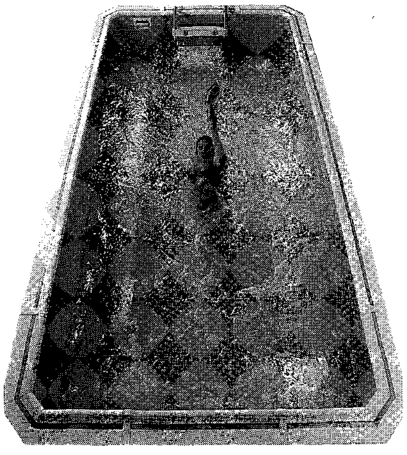
GENERAL

The Lobbyists: How Influence Peddlers Get Their Way in Washington
by Jeffrey H. Birnbaum (Times; $25)

SEVERAL of those mercenary wire-pullers who serve corporate interests allowed a *Wall Street Journal* reporter to follow them on their daily rounds during 1989 and 1990. They turned out to be, for the most part, charmers—intelligent, open-minded, affable—with the result that Mr. Birnbaum's investigative journalism, while extremely informative and readable, doesn't evoke all the righteous wrath you'd expect. Most of the people who lobby Congress are former congressional staff members, but there are exceptions: one of Mr. Birnbaum's lobbyists served in Nixon's Treasury, another in Carter's White House. Everyone was lobbying about taxes: cutting the capital-gains tax; preventing increases in excise taxes; retaining tax write-offs for research and development. Over the years, lobbying techniques have grown more sophisticated—a comparatively new one blends, say, corporations and universities—but the lobbyists agree that old-fashioned methods work best. Money—campaign contributions—is the most effective, and, after money, letters and phone calls from constituents.

Across the Top of the World
by David E. Fisher (Random House; $25)

IN 1991, the author of this book took a three-week cruise to the North Pole aboard the Soviet nuclear icebreaker Sovietskiy Soyuz. The ship, which left from Murmansk, offered luxury accommodations to an international group of a hundred passengers, at thirty thousand dollars a head. Mr. Fisher gives us a factual (and painlessly technical) account of life on board as the Soyuz, built to smash its way through twenty-foot-thick polar ice, headed north, and affords us a knowledgeable review of the history of Arctic exploration and the obsessive search for the Pole. He writes of Sir John Franklin's disastrous expedition of 1845 (two ships, a hundred and twenty-eight men, vanished) and other notable failures of the nineteenth century; in more modern times came Admiral Robert Peary, Dr. Frederick Cook, and Admiral Richard E. Byrd—all of whom claimed to have reached the Pole, and all of whom, he says, lied. He writes, "In the entire lexicon of polar exploration the word *fake* has been applied, rightly or wrongly, to only three people, and all three are American heroes." ♦



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SHOUTS AND MURMURS

SMOKING INCORRECTLY

BY CALVIN TRILLIN

On the "Today" show recently, I heard a representative of the tobacco industry express her disdain for the latest government pronouncement on the connection between smoking and cancer—the Environmental Protection Agency's designation of secondhand smoke as a proven human carcinogen—by saying that the E.P.A. was being "politically correct." As it's used now, "politically correct" is that rare term which appears at first glance to be positive but is always negative. If someone stood up in a faculty senate to say that some resolution should be passed because it was politically correct, he would be arguing the opposite.

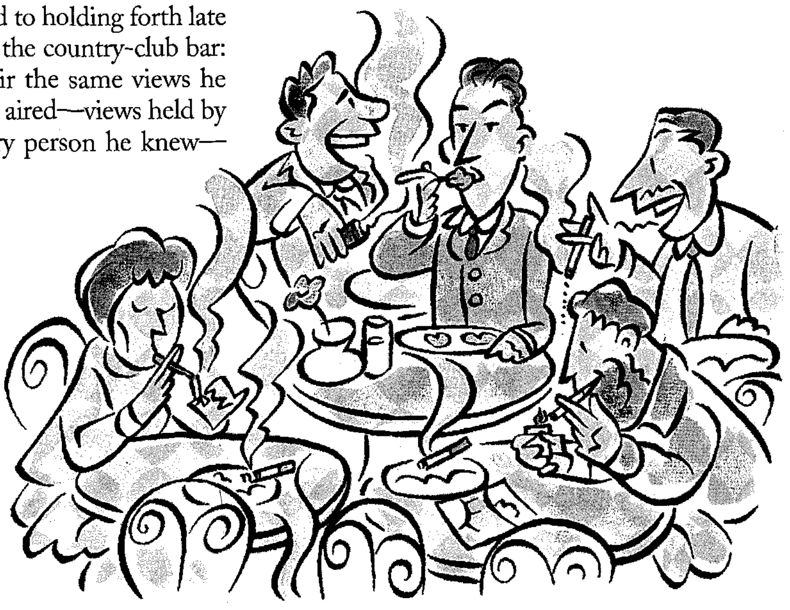
I first heard the term some years ago, in the conversation of a college-age daughter and her friends, and it was always used ironically. Although they were the sort of young people who were concerned about the environment and sensitive to the feelings of minority students, they reserved "politically correct" for those occasions when, say, the wine bottle got tossed into the regular trash for want of a recycling bin. Someone would say, "Uh-oh—not awfully P.C. of you," but not in a tone that necessitated removing the bottle from the regular trash.

The term soon came to be used by people who wanted to call attention to the possibility that college campuses were suffering from the presence of an entrenched orthodoxy. Some of the people who sounded the alarm were genuinely concerned that, say, a fear of offending racial minorities was having a chilling effect on free speech. Some of the people who sounded the alarm were looking for a semantic club to swing at the left—the previous weapon, "knee-jerk liberal," having atrophied and died some years before.

Since no one claimed to be politically correct himself—those under suspicion tended to argue that the condition did not exist—political correctness could be defined only by people interested in warning against it. Although it may be that someone somewhere actually argued seriously that short people ought to be called "vertically challenged" or that pets ought to be called "animal companions," I'm convinced that many of the bizarre euphemisms identified with political correctness were invented in the course of making fun of it.

Also, political correctness was defined by those who warned against it as not just any political orthodoxy but political orthodoxy of the liberal good-think variety. Lynne Cheney, a leader of the anti-P.C. brigade while she ran the National Endowment for the Humanities, was not perceived as practicing political correctness herself, for instance, when she was accused of rigging N.E.H. panels in order to prevent academics suspected of left-wing sympathies from receiving grants. Defining political orthodoxy as exclusively liberal brought a pleasant bonus to the sort of conservative accustomed to holding forth late at night at the country-club bar: he could air the same views he had always aired—views held by nearly every person he knew—and come off in his own mind as a maverick who says what he thinks, consequences be damned. Pronouncements about the need for poor people to pick themselves up by their bootstraps are now regularly introduced with the proud phrase "Well, this may not be politically correct, but . . ."

And if the country-club sage does meet someone who has differing views he can diminish them by saying that they are politically correct—a reflection of some party line rather than the product of independent thought. That's the way the woman from the tobacco industry was using "politically correct" against the E.P.A. A nonsmoker who follows this line of thinking to its logical conclusion can from now on demonstrate that he's a free spirit by lunching every day in the middle of the smoking section of his favorite restaurant—as tough and independent as the Marlboro Man. He won't have to worry about anyone's accusing him of being politically correct. The only thing he'll have to worry about is lung cancer. ♦



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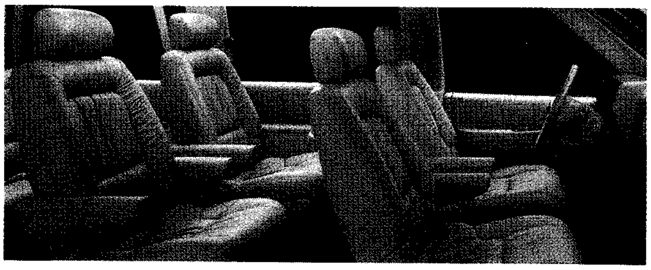

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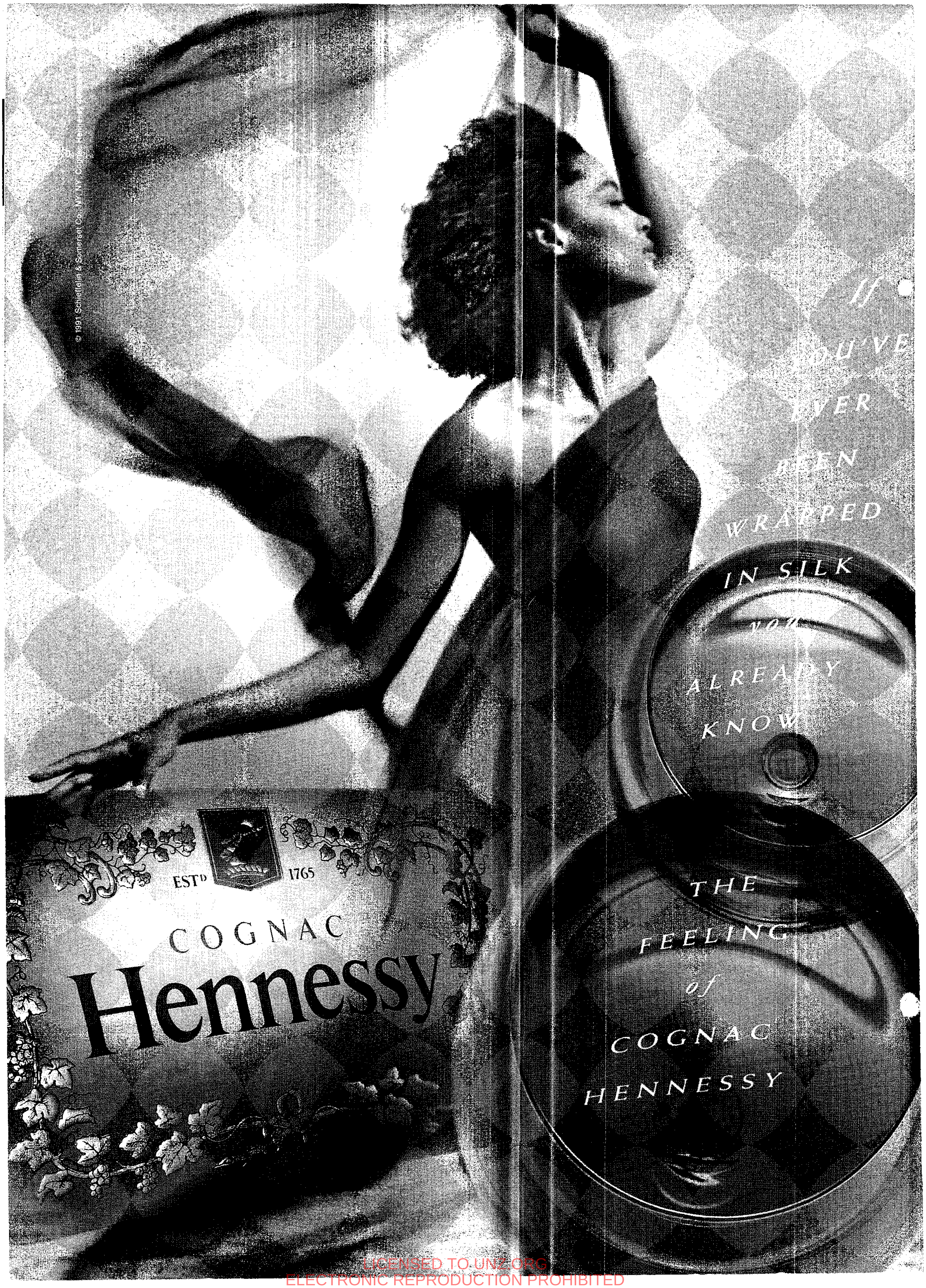
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